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## EDUCATION IN FASCIST ITALY

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# EDUCATION IN FASCIST ITALY

L. MINIO-PALUELLO

*With a Foreword*

*by*

SIR W. D. ROSS

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To my Father  
and to the memory  
of my Mother





## FOREWORD

WHILE the Fascist régime still existed in Italy, many English people were puzzled to know what degree of reality lay behind the ambitious projects and promises of the Fascist leaders. Mr. Minio-Paluello's book presents English readers with a very thorough and interesting account of what Mussolini himself called the most Fascist of all Fascist reforms—the reform of education. In order to understand the Fascist reforms, it is necessary to understand the educational system which they were intended to remould in the interests of the imperial destiny of Italy, and of the spirit which was to bring that about. Accordingly the first Part of the book gives an account of the history of Italian education from the *Risorgimento* to the dawn of the Fascist régime, starting with the *Lex Casati* of 1859 which established the general framework of Italian education, and describing the minor changes effected by later Ministers of Education. The second Part describes the early Fascist reform carried out by Gentile in 1923, that strange combination of genuine idealism and humanism with a cloudy and bombastic philosophy. The third Part deals with the series of changes aimed at rendering education more completely Fascistic, but having as their main features growing interference with the liberty of teachers and growing unsettlement of the lives of their pupils. The fourth Part deals with Bottai's School Charter of 1939 (modelled on his own *Carta del Lavoro* of 1927), which established Italian education in the form which it retained until the fall of the Fascist régime.

Mr. Minio-Paluello is not only an accomplished scholar; he had the disadvantage as a student, and has now the advantage as an historian, of having lived through many years of the Fascist system. He is able to tell us not only what the various 'reforms' were intended to bring about, and to give a clear account of the successive administrative arrangements and the successive curricula, but also how they worked in practice. The general upshot seems to be that many of the changes that were intended remained dead letters; that the only part of the system that was completely 'Fascitized' was elementary education; that higher, and in particular academic, education retained a good deal of real independence, masked of course in many cases by a nominal adherence to Fascist ideals. His book gives some ground for the view that Fascism did not penetrate very deeply into the spirit

of the Italian people, and for the hope that the awakening from the evil dream of imperialism may not be a very long or difficult process when once the Fascist leaders have been removed from power throughout Italy, and the scholars who were driven into exile or silenced have taken up the task of rebuilding Italian education on sounder foundations.

W. D. Ross

1946

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

**I**TALIAN education was affected by Fascism in many ways; it did not, however, undergo a revolution destructive of the old system, nor were new and comprehensive ideals embodied in an all-embracing order. Its administrative machinery preserved many functions almost intact, and the main features of the school organization remained unchanged. As in the past, more attention was paid to the training of the intellect than to the moral discipline of the will or to technical instruction. The Roman Church as a teaching body was not deprived of the most important rights it used to exercise, nor did its position become on the whole more prominent; and the home remained the place where children were taught the fundamentals of a moral life. Many people continued to express, from their chairs or pulpits or in their homes, their beliefs in ideals other than imperialism and State omnipotence. The youths who were brought up in the Fascist 'climate', failed to provide an army devoted to, and ready to fight for, 'the Roman Empire of the working people'.

For all this, the picture of Italian education at the end of the Fascist régime was very different from what it was in 1922. The administration had become more centralized, and many of its branches had been reshaped. Some types of schools had changed both their name and their structure, some new ones had been created, and others had been abolished; the numbers of classes and pupils had increased, especially in the institutions for higher education. The intellectual side had been accentuated in most secondary schools, while physical training had come to the forefront almost everywhere; several attempts had been made to develop technical and vocational instruction. The crucifix hung on the walls of all class-rooms, and religion had become a compulsory subject in the elementary and secondary schools; the confessional establishment benefited from some facilities granted to private education. On the other hand, the new faith in the State and its Duce challenged Catholic beliefs and practice. The military youth organizations were steadily tightening their hold on the boys and girls, and aimed at building the character of the 'new Italians', and for this reason homes were often deserted by the children and suffered interference from the political authorities. Huge masses of people had been organized into bodies which had among their aims the social and political

education of all Italians; hand in hand with the growth of these societies went the suppression of independent cultural institutions. Propaganda was practised by the State and the Fascist Party on the vastest possible scale and helped to a large extent to mould the minds of non-reflective persons. Many teachers and preachers had accepted or pretended to accept the new creed wholeheartedly, a greater number still thought it convenient to submit without enthusiasm to an ever-growing pressure, or did not care to hold and profess independent views; a certain proportion among them carried on in their own way at the expense of some compromise, while a small minority found it more consistent with their calling to resist and suffer punishment. A fanatical belief in Italy's 'infallible' leader and glorious destiny caught the imagination, more than the mind and heart, of many young people. The sense of a right proportion between the interests of the nation and those of individuals and of mankind at large had become rarer than it was; regimentation had engendered a tendency towards slackness and passivity in the weaker vessels, while the exaltation of youth proved fatal to discipline when the better or more ambitious claimed their right to leadership. Many turned sceptical and cynical before their twenties, and others called for something with which Fascism had not provided them. The visions of Rome great in the past and greater in the future, of the Italian people exuberant in numbers and genius but poor and reviled by other people, of a conquest producing riches for the conquerors and civilization for the conquered, and of a fairer distribution of comfort for everybody, had not been evoked and played upon without some effect; many indicted Fascism for failing to keep its promises, and pursued some of those much advertised ideals in other ways.

The Fascists had twenty-one years in which to carry out their educational reforms. The most momentous changes in the school system were the result of a long struggle fought long before the appearance of Fascism, and were already well on the way to realization in 1922. More changes, only at first sight of less importance, were due to a kind of war of attrition between a settled order and new tendencies. Fascism started as a 'movement' with no definite doctrine; it was inevitable, therefore, that other doctrines should be made to contribute and eventually be rejected; several so-called Fascist reforms had to be revised, and much that had been done in the early years of the régime had to be undone as time passed. Even at the height of the régime, what was called 'Fascist doctrine' was not clearly defined; it is difficult, to say the least, to bring into harmony the various statements on this subject made by Mussolini, Bottai, Farinacci,

Gentile, and others; Fascist institutions changed sometimes according to the persons who had charge of them.

The account that follows is meant primarily to give a picture of the state of education in Italy under the Fascist régime. If what has been said above is true the temptation to identify education in Fascist Italy with Fascist education should be resisted. In order to avoid this delusion it is necessary to know some facts about the state of education and the developments in educational institutions during the half-century preceding Fascism; it is also indispensable to be acquainted with the educational problems discussed and the solutions visualized in the first two decades of this century. It will then be easier to estimate what Fascism meant for this most important aspect of Italian life, and to draw the line between the several factors, traditional and new, which might have come into being even without the Fascist régime, and the other factors which presupposed the uprising of 1919 to 1922 and the totalitarian state.

This book was partly written before the fall of Fascism, and finished before any direct source of information on what happened in Italy during the war was accessible. The situation is at present necessarily confused. If the process of de-Fascistization going on now in the freed part of the country continues and is accepted by the whole of the new Italy, many aspects here described will be quickly obliterated. They will, however, remain in the background of the mind of this generation and of the educational and social institutions. The tragic fate that befell Gentile, killed by partisans in Florence for supporting Fascism beyond any hope or by Fascists for not supporting it enough, and the death sentence pronounced in their absence by the Republican Fascist court of Northern Italy against the two other Fascist school reformers, De Vecchi and Bottai, are facts which have hardly anything to do with the future of the reforms they promoted or sponsored. What was condemned in them was their political attitude in a moment of crisis, not the work done by or through them in past years. No such summary judgement is being passed by the present rulers on the whole educational system left behind by Fascism. They seem to be guided in their work by the recognition of the difference between Fascist education and education in the Fascist period.

Special thanks are due to the Publications Committee of the Royal Institute of International Affairs for making it possible to write and publish this book, and in particular to Mr. Ivor Thomas, M.P., for his encouragement and for his help in

making the text more comprehensible to an English-speaking public. The Librarian to the Ministry of Education, Miss D. F. Shuckburgh, was generous in her assistance and in giving access to all publications in its possession. The author's gratitude to her and to several friends who helped him by their suggestions must be recorded here.

*Oxford*  
*April 1945*

## ABBREVIATIONS

- E.N.I.M.: Ente Nazionale per l'Istruzione Media.  
G.I.L.: Gioventù Italiana del Littorio.  
G.U.F.: Gruppi Universitari Fascisti.  
I.N.C.F.: Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista.  
O.N.B.: Opera Nazionale Balilla.  
O.N.D.: Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro.

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# I. BEFORE FASCISM

## Chapter One

### YEARS OF PREPARATION

THE first half of the nineteenth century was the golden age of Italian speculation on practical problems of education; new methods of teaching were the subject of experiment, and there were brought into existence schools of various kinds which in later times became the standard types for the Italian school system; the right of the State to rule over, and control, education was affirmed and practised in ways which were developed and imitated in subsequent years. What had been written on that subject in Great Britain, France, Germany, and Switzerland between the time of Locke and that of Pestalozzi flowed into the currents of local tradition, and gave new motives and hopes to the philosophers, educationists, and statesmen. The institutions that had proved vital abroad were imitated, and many which seemed to be out-of-date in Italy were transformed. The belief had become widespread that man is only half himself if he lacks education, and that no political order is possible unless a moral and intellectual training has made the individual fit to carry out his duties towards society. The call for a new Italy, united and free, caused the need for education to be felt more deeply and more generally. When the political unity of Italy was almost achieved, more quickly than many had expected, Massimo d'Azeglio uttered the phrase which soon became proverbial: *l'Italia è fatta, ora bisogna fare gli italiani*. The reverse of this saying seemed to be more true when unity was a project and an aspiration: if Italy is to be made, the Italians must be made first.

The Napoleonic occupation of Italy was of great moment for the future of education. The political authorities took on themselves the task of providing the country with schools. The centralized State system which had been introduced in France was applied in the 'liberated' provinces; the French Lycées and Collèges were held up as models to be imitated; it was laid down that instruction was to be as universal as possible. The ideas underlying these practical measures were not of course new in Italy; and some attempts had been made to put them into practice. The Neapolitan provinces, where the French system was introduced more consistently than in other parts of Italy, had already seen a plan by the philosopher and economist Antonio

Genovesi (1712-69) for a State organization of the schools of all grades, which was to take the place of the Jesuit monopoly after the expulsion of this order in 1767. Under French rule there was more than planning. In 1806 the Imperial Lieutenant, Joseph Bonaparte, issued a decree empowering the State to take charge of all the schools, and in August of the same year all cities and larger villages were ordered to have at least one male and one female teacher. A few months later several Royal Colleges (*Collegi Reali*) for boys were founded, and were very soon followed by Royal Colleges for girls; the former, on the lines of the French Lycées, became assimilated in the Kingdom of Italy to the *Ginnasii-Licei* ('Gymnasium'-Lyceums); the latter still remain under the same name. In 1809 a committee was set up by Murat, including such men of culture as Vincenzo Cuoco, Melchiorre Delfico, and Giuseppe Capececiatro, with the task of formulating an educational plan for the whole State. The suggestions were summed up in the *Rapporto Cuoco*, propounding a highly centralized system of administration; all children in the kingdom were required to attend elementary instruction in the numerous schools which were to be set up all over the country; secondary schools and universities were to be evenly distributed; the State authorities were to have the right of appointing the teachers and choosing the text-books. The plan finally adopted was the one presented by the Minister Giuseppe Zurlo; it differed from the other one in many ways, but the principles on which it was based were very much the same. Many schools were set up, among them sixteen Lyceums (*Licei*). Similar measures were taken in other parts of Italy. The decree of the Viceroy for the *Regno Italico* dated 4 March 1807 ordered the foundation of eight Lyceums of the French type, four of them residential (*Convitti*), all dependent on the State. Both primary and secondary schools were reorganized on a broader basis in 1811.

While Governments followed with greater or lesser interest the movement for wider and more up-to-date instruction, the thinkers were alive to the need of doing much, and doing it soon, for the enlightenment of the people. The provinces in which speculation came nearest to, or resulted in, action were those of Tuscany, Lombardy, and most of all Piedmont. Raffaello Lambruschini (1788-1873), a Genoese, became a leader in educational thought and practice in Tuscany. Between 1830 and 1843 he published the *Guida dell'Educatore* which was read and appreciated in the whole of Northern and Central Italy. In the Preface to his *Della Educazione*, published in 1850 he, wrote: 'The foundations of political order lie in the moral order;

and this order is based on education: I mean the education which opens, and gives harmony to, the mind, far from burdening it or perverting it; education must continue the theoretical and practical life, the life of the city and that of the family, the poor life of this earth and the blessed life in heaven.' Before writing these words he had practised his ideals, founding a school for peasants in San Cerbone a Figline. He was one of the outstanding personalities of the *Gabinetto Viesseux*, the club in which many movements were initiated for a new cultural life in Florence and Italy. The *Letture di Famiglia*, the *Giornale agrario* and the *Antologia*, which were issued by this *Gabinetto*, were largely responsible for the rapid spread of new ideas both in cultural and in practical life. Infant and elementary schools were founded, under the inspiration of men who met and debated their ideas in that club. An association for infant schools (*asili infantili*) was founded in 1823 in Florence, and was presided over by Count Pietro Guicciardini. Enrico Mayer (1802-77) devoted himself to popular instruction, setting up *asili* and other institutions in Leghorn. Gino Capponi (1792-1876) left Florence early in his youth and travelled in Switzerland, France, Germany, and Great Britain. The experience he gained abroad was put to profit in his work as a historian, economist, and politician. For him, too, popular instruction was one of the first duties of an organized society. In his *Frammento sull'educazione* which was published anonymously in 1845, he insists that the individual should be helped in developing his own personality *from inside*; all the rules of didactics are ineffective if the power of developing the mind from fundamental moral ideas is neglected.

The part played by Mazzini (1805-72) and Vincenzo Gioberti (1801-52) in the work of the moral construction of the Italian nation is too well known to be described here. Let it be remembered that, different though their ideas were both in the political and in the religious sphere, both held that everybody must share in education, and that the State has the right and the duty to provide it, at least in the elementary grade. Mention must be made of the men who had a large share in the organization of the Piedmontese educational system, which was subsequently applied to the whole of Italy. When the French domination came to an end, the Piedmontese Government was confronted with the task of adapting to the restored traditional order the methods and systems which had begun to develop in education. It was on the initiative of Prospero Balbo (1762-1837) as Minister in charge of public instruction, that the elementary schools increased in numbers, and new classical and technical schools were founded or aided; the control of the State over

education was affirmed more strongly than it had ever been under the Savoy monarchy, and the power of the Jesuits was restricted, while other religious institutions, such as the *Fratelli delle Scuole Cristiane*, were given support in their educational apostolate to the poor; teaching in the universities was partly modernized, and the doctrines developed in the eighteenth century were admitted in their own right. In 1848 a real code of education was promulgated in Turin for the Kingdom of Sardinia.

A man who had no direct part in the new legislation, but had a great influence in the revival of education, was Ferrante Aporti (1791-1858). He was a Lombard; in Cremona he directed the higher elementary school for nearly thirty years, having been appointed by the Austrian Government. His interest, however, lay mainly with elementary education (i.e., up to the age of six). It seemed to him a mistake that the Infant Schools should be considered as places of refuge, resembling a kind of hospital. An English book, *On the Importance of Educating the Infant Children* (1824), which he knew in a German translation, helped him to find the means of realizing his dreams. After the first Infant Schools (*Scuola Infantile*) founded in Cremona in 1829, many others followed in Lombardy and Piedmont. He wrote several handbooks for educationists, and in 1844 secured the founding in Turin of the first Training Schools (*Scuola di Metodo*) for a three-month training course for teachers. From his work are derived a great number of the existing *asili*, although the methods he applied were largely superseded by more modern ones. In 1839 a *Società degli asili* was started in Turin by a committee in which the most prominent members were Cavour and Carlo Boncompagni di Mombello (1804-80). Among the pupils of Ferrante Aporti was Giovanni Antonio Rayneri (1810-67), author of several works on pedagogics inspired by the philosophy of Rosmini, and headmaster of two Training Schools. Angelo Fava, a Venetian, who fled the Austrian domination and became a general director of the Training Schools and elementary schools in the Sardinian States was also closely connected with Aporti's movement. A certain influence in education was due to Giacinto Mompianti (1785-1855) who introduced Joseph Lancaster's method of pupil-teacher education into Lombardy, and had followers in Piedmont also. Cesare Balbo (1789-1853), apart from his importance as a historian, as moral head of the *neo-guelfi*, and as one of the spiritual fathers of new Italy, had a special title to be a collaborator in the legislative work regarding education; he had definite views on this subject; in 1832 he had written *L'educazione della prima infanzia*

*della classe indigente*, and in other writings had shown his keen interest on this problem. In one of his *Lettere politiche e letterarie*, published in 1855, he insists on the need of instruction with moral and religious aims for the lower classes, and with political aims for the upper classes.

Gioberti, C. Balbo, Rayneri, Fava, and the historian of philosophy and rationalistic philosopher Giovanni Maria Bertini (1818-76) collaborated with the Minister of Public Instruction, Boncompagni, in the preparation of the law and decrees giving a new trend to education in the Kingdom. Boncompagni himself was one of the faithful servants of the 'liberal' education. His connexion with the committee for the foundation of infant schools has already been mentioned; he also worked as a teacher in the first of those schools founded in Piedmont, and several of his writings were dedicated to the promotion of these beneficial institutions. As a politician he was a follower of Cavour's doctrine: 'a free Church in a free State'. This principle was applied by him almost ruthlessly in scholastic reform. All privileges of religious orders were abolished; no interference in the schools on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities was admitted, and the seminaries were ordered to keep to the rule that only youths intending to take holy orders should be instructed there. The educational system which resulted from the law and decrees of October 1848 put Piedmont in the vanguard of educational progress in Italy. On the whole this system was confirmed by the law of 1859, the *Lex Casati*, which became the fundamental law for education in Italy. We are not going, therefore, to give the details of the Boncompagni code, since we shall have to deal at length with the more mature 'Organic Laws' of 1859.

In the meantime all possible ways were tried by the friends of education for the diffusion of the new ideas and methods and for the discussion of the problems connected with them. We have already mentioned the *Società per gli asili* which started its work in 1839. Another association with much broader aims was founded in 1849 by such persons as Gioberti and Rayneri, the Society for Instruction and Education, which was concerned both with the actual foundation of schools and with inquiries into the political and moral issues of education. The need for technical culture of a type more suited to the Piedmontese provinces was emphasized and partly met by the *Associazione Agraria Subalpina*. The *Società delle Allieve Maestre* was set up by Boncompagni, Aporti, Domenico Berti, and Luigi Franchi di Pont, with the object of helping girls and young women who were training to be schoolmistresses to widen their outlook, overcome some of their difficulties, and keep in touch with each

other. Many other societies and groups saw the light and started their fruitful work in most towns of Piedmont, Lombardy, and other provinces of Italy in this period. Less numerous, of course, but not less effective, were the periodicals which took an interest in education. Among those that were mainly educational were the *Educatore Primario*, founded in 1845; the *Giornale della Società d'Istruzione e di Educazione*, which was founded in 1849, and replaced in 1852 by the *Istitutore*; the *Letture Popolari*, started in 1837 by Luigi Valerio, suppressed for political reasons in 1841, and revived in 1842 under the name of *Letture di Famiglia*. Congresses of educationists, too, became more and more frequent, the most important among them being the annual meetings of the Society for Instruction and Education.

This multifarious activity was not restricted to lay initiative. While several existing religious orders and institutions tried to keep pace with the spread of instruction, new ones were set up which made of the new ideals of universal education another instrument of the Christian apostolate. The most remarkable exponent of this revival was Giovanni Bosco (1815-88). His saintly and active love for poor abandoned children resulted in a work which corresponded in a way to the educational trend of his times. The road which he was called to take for the saving of souls led to one of the most spectacular school organizations in the world. The first group of abandoned children whom he gathered in 1841 became so numerous that by 1846 a special 'oratory' had to be founded for them in Turin; thence sprang the Salesian congregation which soon had many houses in Piedmont and beyond its frontiers; and the sister congregation of the Daughters of Mary Auxiliatrix extended to girls the advantages of Bosco's apostolate. The religious members, the 'co-operators', and the pupils of these orders have steadily multiplied; so that to-day there are not less than 150 of their houses, with as many schools, in Italy alone.

Piedmont was preparing to bring unity and independence to the whole peninsula. Educational developments in Piedmont and elsewhere looked more towards the nation of the future than towards the small States that were disappearing, and the legislation of 1848 had been left behind in many important details. It was necessary therefore to recast the law in order to meet the new needs, and, if possible, to make it capable of easy adaptation to the other provinces which might be added to the Kingdom of Piedmont. The *Lex Casati* of 1859 was the answer.

## Chapter Two

### THE 'LEX CASATI'

THE law promulgated on 13 November 1859, and known as the *Legge Casati*, remained the fundamental law for public and private instruction till 1923. It is a sign of great vitality for an Italian law to last for more than sixty years. It is true that its contents have not been spared the uninterrupted sequence of revisions, adaptations, and *ritocchi* to which such texts as this are duly and unduly subjected; nor was it long before a reform of education was called for. But no partial changes in the institutions provided for by that bill removed the main pillars on which the whole system was based; and even the reform of 1923, which was meant to sweep away all the useless vestiges of the past, did not do away with many of the principles which had animated the legislators of the Piedmontese State.

The man who gave his name to this charter of the Italian schools was the Minister for Public Instruction in the second half of 1859, Count Gabrio Casati (1798-1873). He was not himself primarily an educationist; he started as a mathematician but soon turned to politics. As Mayor (*Podestà*) of his native town, Milan, he tried to persuade the Austrian authorities to go further than they wanted in the way of liberal reforms; but the result was that he found himself on the side of the revolutionaries in 1848, and became President of the Council of Ministers in the short-lived Piedmontese and Lombard Government. His political career was continued in Piedmont, where he sat in the Senate as a supporter of Cavour, and when he was appointed Minister for Public Instruction in 1859 he represented the ideals which had in Cavour their most powerful spokesman. It may well be said that the *Lex Casati* is one of Cavour's enduring legacies. Among those helping the Minister in the preparation of the law were Angelo Fava, who had already contributed to the Boncompagni code, and Domenico Berti (1820-97), who had been the headmaster of the Training Schools at Casale Monferrato and Novara, and had founded in 1850 the first school for the training of elementary teachers; in his writings he had insisted upon the separation of Church and State, and the need for freedom in education.

The principles assumed by the Piedmontese Government seem to have included: (1) The central Government, and, under its

supervision, the local authorities, are largely responsible for the instruction of the people; given its large share in education, the State acts, in a measure, as the conscience of the nation; the initiative for the spread and improvement of instruction remains to a large extent with the State and only in a lesser degree with private individuals and bodies; the supervision of education is the duty of the State, even where other bodies carry on their work independently. (2) Instruction, at least the rudiments of 'the three Rs', must be given to as many persons as possible; secondary and higher education must be fostered and made accessible, whenever possible, to deserving youths with no financial means. (3) Secondary and higher education are meant mainly to prepare citizens for the various duties demanded of them by society, whether in the civil service, liberal professions, arts, industries, or trade; the *homo politicus* overshadows the *homo contemplativus*. (4) Classical and literary instruction is the basis of the culture needed for the higher professions, as it is the most formative of the intellectual forces and the most productive of a cultured mind; but the sciences, national history, geography, and possibly foreign languages widen the too narrow horizon of a traditionally rhetorical education. (5) Religion should not be banned from the schools, but is not the basis of education; in the secondary schools it should appear only as tolerated; the State is the real spiritual director, if any such should be required in a lay and anti-dogmatic education.

The administration provided by the *Lex Casati* includes the central and the most important local authorities. The Central Board is constituted as follows: (a) the Minister of Public Instruction; (b) the Higher Council for Public Instruction; (c) three central inspectors (*Ispettori Generali*), i.e., one for the universities and institutions of university grade, one for the classical secondary schools, and one for the elementary, normal, and technical schools. The Minister has control of the educational institutions dependent on the State and, subject to certain limitations, of those provided compulsorily by the local authorities; moreover, he supervises private teaching from the point of view of morals, hygiene, the State laws, and public order; all State schools, inspectors, and headmasters depend on the Minister; private schools not conforming to the rules set down for them are liable to be closed by order of the Minister.

The Higher Council consists of twenty-one members chosen by the King and presided over by the Minister; they give their advice on, and prepare the texts of, the bills to be presented to Parliament, and regulations to be issued by the Minister; they advise the Minister on the text-books to be approved for adop-



tion\* in the elementary and secondary schools, and on the penalties to be meted out to university professors and secondary-school teachers for very serious offences; they must be consulted on the merits of candidates to be appointed to professorships in the universities. The three central inspectors, chosen by the King, must see that the schools and establishments coming under their jurisdiction work smoothly and effectively in accordance with the laws and regulations; they suggest the names of possible members for the boards which choose the new teachers; and give their advice on the penalties and rewards due to the teachers.

The local administration includes: (a) the Royal Supervisor (*Provveditore*) of Studies; (b) the Royal Provincial Inspector of Schools; and (c) the Provincial Scholastic Council. These authorities reside in the main town (*capoluogo*) of each county (*provincia*) of the Kingdom. The Supervisor represents the Minister for all purposes connected with the classical and technical secondary schools of his province. The Inspector has a similar power over the elementary schools and training colleges for teachers. The Provincial Scholastic Council is a mixed body; it is presided over by the Supervisor and includes, besides the Provincial Inspector and the headmasters of the classical and technical schools, two representatives of the provincial autonomous administration, and two representatives of the communal administrations of the province. The universities do not come under any local authority, except the heads of the universities themselves; the King appoints a Rector for each university from among its professors; the Rector remains in charge for one year.

Pre-elementary education is not dealt with in this law; it is left to develop as before, under the control and on the initiative of local bodies and private individuals. Elementary instruction is given to children of both sexes from their sixth year. The elementary schools are divided into a lower and a higher course, each of them lasting two years. The subjects taught in the lower course are: religion, reading, writing, arithmetic, the Italian language (French in the French communes), and the metric system; the same subjects are continued in the higher course, and others are added, viz., book-keeping, geography, national history, and some practical elements of physics and natural science; girls are taught needlework, and boys elementary geometry. Elementary instruction is free, and provided by the communes. Each commune is bound to set up at least one lower course for boys and one for girls in every inhabited place where there are at least fifty children of school age, i.e., between six and eleven; should the commune be too poor or scantily

inhabited, an agreement may be reached with neighbouring communes for common schools or common teachers; higher courses must be set up, separately for boys and girls, in all places with more than 4,000 inhabitants, and wherever there are secondary schools of some kind; no course should have more than seventy children; and parallel courses must be set up where and when this number is exceeded. Elementary instruction is compulsory, but limited to the lower course, exception being made in those cases where hardship would be caused to families; the head of the family is liable to a penalty if he does not make provision for his children to receive instruction. Private teaching is allowed, in which case the head of the family has to give proof that his children are so instructed. The communal schools are classified, mainly for financial purposes, into six groups, three of urban and three of rural schools; those which exist in localities with less than 500 inhabitants, or are not open for the whole scholastic year, are non-classified schools. The teachers must possess a State qualification; the approval of the Provincial Inspector is sufficient for teaching in non-classified schools; male teachers must be at least eighteen years old, and female teachers seventeen; these limits can be lowered in exceptional cases to sixteen and fourteen years.

The Normal Schools (*Scuole Normali*) train the teachers. The State provides for eighteen such schools, nine for boys and nine for girls who have had a complete elementary instruction and are aged at least sixteen in the case of boys or fifteen in the case of girls. The course of study lasts three years, during which the following subjects are taught: Italian language and literature, general geography, national history and geography, arithmetic and book-keeping, geometry, natural history, physics, chemistry, hygiene, drawing, calligraphy, pedagogics, needlework (for girls), and agriculture and elements of law (for boys). The pupils of the third year receive training in, and attend, actual teaching in some elementary school for one or more hours every week. At the end of the second year the student can qualify as a teacher of the lower course, and at the end of the third year as a teacher of the higher course for elementary schools.

The main schools of the secondary grade are the 'Gymnasiums' and Lyceums, whose aim it is to give the literary and philosophical instruction necessary for the more specialized university studies. Instruction in the 'Gymnasium' lasts five years and is followed by the Lyceum course lasting three more years; actually they can be considered as the lower and higher course of one classical school lasting eight years. The curriculum for the 'Gymnasium' includes the Italian, Latin, and Greek languages,

elements of rhetoric, arithmetic, geography, history, and Greek and Roman antiquities; that for the Lyceum includes philosophy, mathematics, physics and chemistry, Italian, Latin and Greek literature, history, and natural history; a 'spiritual director' chosen by the Minister for each school gives some religious instruction. There must be at least one Lyceum and one 'Gymnasium' in each province; the State provides for the Lyceums and some of the 'Gymnasiums', the communes for the other 'Gymnasiums'. Teachers are chosen by public competition from among graduates of the universities; they are appointed by the King in accordance with the proposals of the commission which has examined the candidates; teachers of the communal 'Gymnasiums' must be approved by the Supervisor for the province and confirmed by the Minister. Children can be enrolled in the 'Gymnasium' after they have attended the four-year course in an elementary school and passed an entrance examination; another examination must be passed before a child is admitted into the Lyceum; a commission of teachers appointed by the Minister examines all students at the end of their Lyceum studies; this last examination has to be passed before students can enter the universities. The principle of freedom of teaching is safeguarded through the provision allowing public and private bodies and persons possessed of the due qualifications to set up schools of this kind without any impediment; these private establishments may be recognized as having the same value as the public ones (*Scuole pareggiate*), if the Minister judges them to give sufficient guarantee of equally good instruction; the final examinations, however, can be passed only in the public schools.

Technical instruction is meant to give the necessary training to those young people who intend to enter certain public careers, industries, trade and agricultural management. The schools in which this kind of instruction is given are divided into two grades; the lower is the Technical School, the higher the Technical Institute, each course lasting three years. The curriculum of the Technical School includes the Italian and French languages, arithmetic and book-keeping, algebra and geometry, drawing and calligraphy, geography and history, natural history, physics and chemistry, and the fundamental elements of the rights and duties of citizenship. The Technical Institutes may have several sections, according to the different professions to which they lead. The subjects taught are Italian literature, history and geography, the English and German languages, administrative and commercial law; public economy, commercial matters, social arithmetic; chemistry and physics, algebra and geometry including trigonometry, drawing, agronomy and natural history.

Teaching in these schools is of a practical character, and the special conditions of the State and province where it is given have to be kept in mind. Each province must have at least one Technical School and as many Technical Institutes as local economic conditions may require. Admission to the Technical School and Technical Institute is subject to the same regulations as admission to the 'Gymnasium' and Lyceum.

The aims of the universities and similar higher institutes are twofold: (a) to prepare young people for those public and private careers which require special studies, and (b) to preserve and increase scientific and literary culture in the State. A university consists of not more than five faculties, i.e., theological, legal, medical, scientific, philosophical, and literary; a university may consist of fewer faculties. Independent law schools of university rank may exist in smaller towns; a Higher Technical School (*Scuola d'Applicazione per Ingegneri*) is to be set up in Turin and annexed to the scientific faculty. Teachers can be either permanent (*professori ordinari*), or temporary (*professori straordinari*), or private (*privati docenti*). Permanent professors are appointed by the King according to the proposals of a commission whose task it is to adjudge candidates in a public competition; the Superior Council of Instruction must give its approval to the judgement of the commission; only the main subjects in each Faculty are taught by permanent professors. Temporary professors are appointed every year by the Minister, who chooses them from among the private teachers; less important subjects essential to each Faculty, and those main subjects for which there is no permanent professor, are taught by the temporary professors. Private teachers are of two kinds: (a) the aggregated doctors (*dottori aggregati*) chosen for life by the Faculties (not more than two by each Faculty every year) from among those who have graduated in the university; and (b) those who have passed a special examination and have received from the Minister the necessary qualification in one well-defined subject, whether included or not in those of the Faculties. The King can appoint as teachers of any kind, independently of any competition or examination, those men of science and scholars whose work has brought them fame in some special field. Permanent professors are appointed for life, unless they are deprived of their rights for grave misdemeanours, after judgement has been passed by the Superior Council of Instruction in conjunction with two colleagues of the defendant. Private teachers who are not 'aggregated doctors' lose their right of teaching if they fail to give a course of lectures for five consecutive years. Students can be either undergraduates or 'hearers'

(*uditori*). The undergraduates have to pass an entrance examination and a certain number of special and general examinations before they are awarded their degree (*laurea dottorale*); there is a special examination to be passed in each of the main subjects taught in the Faculty, the syllabus for each of them being determined by the professors; after these have been passed every undergraduate has to write an essay in a stated number of hours on a subject chosen by the Faculty, pass a *viva voce* examination in all the subjects studied in the course of his university studies, and write and discuss in public a dissertation on a theme agreed upon in advance by himself and one professor of the Faculty. The student is, however, allowed to choose the lessons he is to attend, and to pass the special examinations in the order he prefers. He is charged some fixed fees, varying for each university and Faculty; a special fee is charged for each private course he wants to attend, and the amount goes to the private teacher. The university has a good deal of autonomy; the professors are free to fix the limits of their teaching and their syllabuses; many points regarding the administration of the institution are left to the academic body (*Corpo Accademico*) which consists of the permanent professors and 'aggregated doctors'. The head of the university, however, and the Deans or Presidents of each Faculty are appointed by the King. The universities are financed by the State.

## Chapter Three

### EARLY ACHIEVEMENTS

IN the eleven years following the *Lex Casati* the kingdom for which it was promulgated had almost trebled in size and population; countries widely separated both in space and culture had been brought into one political body. The educational laws were applied in the new provinces with as little change as possible, and the process of assimilation, although far from being completed in a few years, was surprisingly rapid. A few facts connected with the unification of the rules governing the school system will be given below; at this point it may be interesting to inquire into the state of education a few years after Rome had become the capital of the Kingdom of Italy, and political unity, freedom, and independence had been assured. For this quick survey it seems appropriate to choose the year 1876-77 as being near enough to the beginning of the new national life and far enough from the enactment of the *Lex Casati* for the effects of that educational policy to be appreciated. Moreover, we are helped considerably in understanding conditions in that year by the objective account written for the Paris Exhibition of 1878 by the best educationist of the time, Aristide Gabelli. The year 1877 is also, in a way, a turning-point in the compulsory education of children.

It is not possible to form a clear idea of the state of pre-elementary education; the Infant Schools and similar institutions were controlled mainly by local authorities, by religious bodies, and by private societies and individuals; therefore details about them are, and always were, very difficult to obtain. It can be reckoned that there were about 1,500 of these schools for boys and girls up to six years of age, and that more than 200,000 children attended them. The system of teaching adopted in these schools was mainly based on the model given by Aporti, i.e., a very elementary intellectual instruction side by side with children's games and physical training; the Froebel methods had, however, already been introduced in several schools in Northern Italy.

Elementary education had progressed in a way that did not satisfy those contemporaries who looked forward to a total victory over illiteracy; but if one thinks of the difficulties that

had to be overcome, of which perhaps the most important were poverty and the lack of teachers, it will be realized that not much more could have been done in that direction. Almost every commune had complied with the injunction to set up at least one school for boys and one for girls; in 1876 only 96 communes out of more than 8,000 were without a single boys' school, and 358 without a girls' school. There were, however, more than 700 localities having more than 500 inhabitants without classes for boys, and more than 1,200 of them without classes for girls. The number of classes under the control of the communes was little more than 38,000, of which 19,000 were for boys, 14,500 for girls, the others mixed; 9,000 more classes belonged to private institutions, more than half of them for girls; altogether there was, on an average, one class for every 565 inhabitants. The following figures give an idea of the progress achieved in this fight against illiteracy in the first fifteen years of the Italian Kingdom:

<i>Scholastic Year</i>	<i>Number of Pupils</i>	<i>Pupils per 10,000 Inhabitants</i>
1861-62	1,008,674	453
1863-64	1,178,143	544
1865-66	1,217,870	559
1867-68	1,329,367	605
1869-70	1,577,654	606
1871-72	1,745,467	644
1873-74	1,836,381	680
1875-76	1,931,617	715

The increase is much more noticeable among girls than among boys, as the proportion of girls and boys in every hundred pupils in 1866-67 and 1875-76 shows; the increase in the number of girls was most marked in the more backward parts of Italy, where feminine education was very rare:

	<i>Year 1866-67</i>		<i>Year 1875-76</i>	
	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>
Northern Italy . . .	58	42	54	46
Central Italy . . .	59	41	56	44
Southern Italy . . .	61	39	55	45
Islands . . .	63	37	55	45

The standard of instruction for the average child was still very low. Nine out of ten classes were of the lower course, which means that only the most rudimentary elements of reading, writing, and reckoning could be taught. Most classes included

children of two or more forms; and if it was not possible for one teacher to look after two forms at a time, the number of hours for each group of pupils was proportionately reduced. About one-third of the children enrolled in the schools at the beginning of the school year were no longer attending at the end of it. Many classes were overcrowded, the average number of pupils to a class being 43. The situation varied considerably in different parts of the country; the provinces of Basilicata and Calabria had only 31 and 34 children attending school out of every thousand inhabitants in 1875-76, while the corresponding figure for the subalpine provinces was 112.

The most urgent need, if elementary instruction was to be provided for the three million children between six and twelve, was to have numerous and good recruits for the teaching profession. In fifteen years teachers had increased from about 30,000 to more than 47,000; but very few among them had had a proper training; about half that number had either a provisional authorization to teach and hardly any qualification, or qualifications granted by past Governments on the most diverse grounds. The other half had come from the Normal Schools of the Piedmontese type; the studies and training they had gone through were by no means sufficient, to judge by more recent standards, and their inadequacy was strongly felt even at that time; but the first step had been taken towards a regular and uniform training of teachers. The Normal Schools in 1876 numbered 112, of which 67 were for girls; they were provided with an elementary school for the training of the students and were attended largely by boarders, a number of whom received State grants. Pupils in these schools numbered about 7,800 (6,000 girls); but not all of them would qualify as teachers for the higher course in the elementary schools, since a large proportion of them did not go further than the second year, and were allowed to teach only in the first two forms. Most of the Normal Schools were in northern and central Italy; this fact made it very difficult to find teachers suited for work in the southern provinces and in the islands, where the dialects and customs of the people were a great impediment to mutual understanding and cultural penetration; in many places women, especially northern women, were not acceptable. The financial position of teachers, although it had been improved from what it had been in Piedmont, was still very bad, the average annual wages being 600 lire, i.e., £24 at that time; it was not so easy, therefore, to find gifted young people prepared to live in the most uncomfortable parts of the country and in mountain districts for the purpose of teaching. A good proportion of teachers were



still priests, monks, and nuns, but their number was on the decrease; from 27 per cent in 1866 they went down to 16 per cent in 1875. Women, on the other hand, were entering this career, almost the only one open to them at that time, in larger numbers, though their wages were still less than those of the male teachers. The communes had the right to appoint and dismiss teachers. Appointments were generally for short terms; no pensions were provided. All these facts made it impossible to realize vast hopes till after a great while. The State had only just been founded, and remedies could not be discovered immediately.

Illiteracy was being fought through the instruction not only of children, but also of adults. The communes had been required to set up evening classes for men and Sunday classes for women; and a large number of them obeyed. In 1876 more than half a million adults, one-third of them women, had given their names as pupils; many of these, it is true, abandoned their classes before they had taken advantage of the teaching, but some hundreds of thousands among them must have learned to read. On the other hand a rather drastic measure was enforced by the army authorities in order to teach illiterate soldiers the alphabet; they were not released from their military duties unless they had attended the regimental classes with some results. The results were quite good; while 54 per cent of the recruits born in 1853 were illiterate when called up, only 7 per cent were not able to read and write when they went back to their homes in 1876. It is true that illiteracy was still appalling, especially in some parts and among women; not many figures are available, but it is known that in 1871 73 per cent of the population in the Kingdom could not read, and the figure for women in Basilicata at the same period was 95 per cent; but while in 1866, 64 men out of 100 in the age-group, 20 were illiterate, this figure dropped to 52 by 1875.

Children who had successfully attended the four forms of the elementary school, had the choice either of discontinuing their education (which most of them did) or of starting the classical studies leading to the university, or of entering the technical schools. Classical education was given in the 'Gymnasiums' and Lyceums, belonging partly to the State and partly to public and private bodies, and in the religious seminaries. The State had 104 'Gymnasiums' and 80 Lyceums in 1876, with 16,000 students, as compared with 10,000 in 1861; but more than that number of boys attended the other schools. During the scholastic year 1874-75 the students for the two courses of classical studies

were distributed in the following numbers between the State and other schools:

	<i>Schools depending on</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>State</i>	<i>Public Bodies</i>	<i>Private Enterprise</i>	<i>Seminaries</i>	
<i>Ginnasio</i> . .	9,296	10,408	4,644	8,411	32,759
<i>Liceo</i> . .	5,132	1,345	1,099	1,635	9,211
<b>Total</b> . .	<b>14,428</b>	<b>11,753</b>	<b>5,743</b>	<b>10,046</b>	<b>41,970</b>

There was a great difference in the teaching in the various kinds of schools; but since all students had to submit to examinations in the State 'Gymnasiums' and Lyceums if they wanted their studies to be recognized for public purposes, above all for admission to the universities, it was necessary for all to approximate to the methods adopted in the State schools. The position was specially difficult with regard to the seminaries. In 1876 there were 284 of different sizes and grades. Their first concern was, of course, to prepare boys for the priesthood; but instruction was offered to many whose vocation had not yet been manifested, and to others who intended to pursue quite different roads in life. Many parents welcomed the opportunity of having their children's education supervised by priests; moreover seminaries were spread all over the country, much more so than lay schools; many small towns where no opportunity for post-elementary instruction was otherwise available had their seminaries, and families keen on having their children near home, or too poor to send them to distant schools, found in the seminaries the answer to their needs. Most of the seminaries, however, were not in a condition to give the instruction required to pass the State examinations; only 36 had a full three-years' higher course, corresponding more or less to the Lyceums; Greek, history, natural sciences, and literature found hardly any place in most curricula, while scholastic philosophy and theology were the main subjects. In consequence, students from the seminaries were handicapped when they had to compete with those from other schools; more so because the examiners were always chosen from among teachers of State schools. Attempts were made to force the seminaries to instruct only boys intended for the priesthood; success attended the milder measure of imposing on them, as on all other private schools, a kind of State supervision, in as far as they provided education for lay students.

The fees for the whole course of 'Gymnasiums' and Lyceums were kept very low, so that it was possible to make this type of school quite popular, while the difficulty of the studies maintained the intellectual standard at a rather high level. There, boys from the richest class met the children of the lower *bourgeoisie*; the 'Gymnasiums' and Lyceums were already the schools *par excellence* and were contributing to a large extent towards training the democratic ruling class of Italy. Aristocratic and rich parents had, of course, other ways of giving instruction to their children; private teaching at home was still very widespread; some religious institutions provided education for this class of youths; and larger financial means were required for children to be sent to the State boarding-schools (*Convitti Nazionali*), which had then, and have always preserved, a rather aristocratic character. But while it became more and more natural for people of all classes to send their children to the State schools, even in the *Convitti Nazionali* the privileged pupils came in touch with others. The *Convitti* were generally attached to a public 'Gymnasium' and Lyceum, the boarders mixing in the classes with the day pupils; some of the boarders, moreover, in every *Convitto* had obtained State grants and came from the poorer classes.

The Technical (vocational) Schools of the lower grade (*Scuole Tecniche*) had to meet a double need. They had to provide post-elementary instruction for those children whose parents were not in a position to keep them at home till they reached about twenty years of age; on the other hand children who wanted to qualify for professions requiring a certain amount of specialized culture were able to receive a more practical and easier instruction in the three forms of the Technical School which prepared the way to several sections of the Technical Institute. The ambiguous character of the Technical Schools was a source of great difficulty when the attempt was made to adapt them to the real needs of the children between ten and fourteen years of age. But it can be considered a great achievement that, when practically no free or almost free instruction was available after the inadequate four years' elementary schooling, tens of thousands of children were able to attend some kind of school for three more years. The Technical School was almost unknown before the *Lex Casati*; in 1874-75 more than 22,000 pupils attended the 63 State schools of this type and the 241 communal and 19 private schools; most of the children did not go further than the first or second form, partly because their parents needed to send them to work, partly because this type of school was too much of a secondary school and too little of a popular post-elementary one.

The Technical Institutes came under the Ministry of Agriculture till 1877; this was to be a guarantee that their practical character was preserved and enhanced. They were almost unknown in 1859; but they were so well adapted to the needs of the time that between 1861 and 1874 their number grew from fifteen to seventy, half of these directly dependent on the State. An attempt to leave every school free to choose its organization according to local requirements failed; from 1872 onwards the two first forms gave a uniform general instruction, the third and fourth were divided into sections for students of rural economy, commercial matters, industrial matters, and physics and mathematics; this last section was much more like a school of theoretical studies than a vocational school. The students for the scholastic year 1861-62 numbered little over one thousand; in 1874-75 their number had increased to 5,495. Only a minority chose the industrial section; the others were fairly equally distributed between the remaining sections.

Special schools of different kinds had existed for a long time, but they had, generally speaking, a very low vitality. Almost all those which survived in later years were founded from 1860 onwards. Out of 35 nautical schools in existence in 1860, only five were really working, and were attended by 265 pupils; in 1874 there were 29 of them, with almost a thousand students. Three schools for miners were founded by the State between 1863 and 1873. Two thousand children attended the 25 or more schools for arts and crafts, set up by the State and by other bodies between 1861 and 1874. About 30 establishments provided an elementary instruction in agricultural matters, mostly in a very practical way; and every year very short courses of lectures were held by experts on agriculture in a great number of localities, in order that as many peasants as possible might have some knowledge of the most useful technical and scientific discoveries.

Higher instruction was imparted in the universities and other institutions of the same grade which, with but few exceptions, existed in the old Italian States. They were now being brought more and more in line with the provisions of the *Lex Casati*; the most important changes had been the abolition of the Theological Faculty, the foundation of several Higher Technical Schools annexed to the scientific faculties, and the multiplication of *scuole*, i.e., Faculties of a minor importance existing side by side with the four main Faculties and providing training for the professions of chemist, veterinary surgeon, midwife, agricultural expert, and others. Altogether there were twenty-one Faculties of Law, seventeen of Science, fourteen of Medicine, eleven of Philosophy

and Belles Lettres. The Universities were classified into primary (Bologna, Naples, Padua, Palermo, Pavia, Pisa, Rome, and Turin), and secondary (Cagliari, Catania, Genoa, Macerata, Messina, Modena, Parma, Sassari, and Sienna); four minor universities were left to govern themselves (*Università libere*, in Camerino, Ferrara, Perugia, Urbino); Higher Technical Schools existed in the universities of Bologna, Padua, Palermo, Pavia, Pisa, and Rome. The number of students in the universities had remained practically stationary for the last fifteen years; of the 10,000 students in 1877, 38 per cent studied Law, 32 per cent Medicine, 13 per cent Engineering, 3 per cent Philosophy and Belles Lettres, 2 per cent Sciences, and the others were distributed between the *scuole*. The most populated universities were those of Naples (2,648), Turin (1,435), and Padua (907); Macerata had only 47 students, and Camerino 28.

The institutions for higher education other than universities were of very different kinds. Some of them continued the tradition of high schools with an independent organization, others were new and had to meet the call for a more complete instruction in technical, commercial, and agricultural matters. The Institute of Advanced Studies at Florence, and the Scientific and Literary Academy at Milan, were not very different from universities lacking the Faculty of Law (both Florence and Milan), and Medicine (Milan). The Higher Normal School at Pisa, which had been founded in the Napoleonic period as a branch of the École Normale Supérieure of Paris, and re-founded in 1848, had the unique character of a training college for teachers of secondary schools; the most promising youths were given scholarships, so that the Scuola Normale was becoming one of the most reliable centres for higher studies in classics, literature, and science in Italy. The Higher Technical Institutes at Milan and the Higher Technical Schools at Turin and Naples were independent technical high schools, similar to those that had been annexed to the scientific Faculties in many Universities. All these schools, set up between 1860 and 1874, constituted the biggest step ever taken in Italy for the co-operation between higher instruction and technical progress. The High Schools of Veterinary Medicine at Milan, Naples, and Turin, and the two High Schools of Agriculture at Milan (founded in 1870) and Portici (founded in 1872) were the practical answer to the growing request for persons able to apply the results of science to Italian agriculture. The Institute of Forestry at Vallombrosa, set up in 1869, instructed a few young people sent from all the provinces where the preservation of woods was to be safeguarded. The Higher School of Commerce at Venice was founded in

1868, and prepared on the average a hundred people every year for careers in economy and finance; a section was devoted to diplomatic studies, and another to modern languages. The Naval High School at Genoa, founded in 1870, was a technical high school specializing in naval construction; and the Museo Industriale at Turin became in 1867, five years after its foundation, a school for the promotion of industrial and commercial progress, in fact a complementary branch of the Higher Technical School. Nearly two thousand students attended all these different higher schools in 1876.

This brief survey may give an idea of the actual achievements of the first fifteen years of work for education in a united Italy. They have not been only transient results; the foundations were laid for the really immense construction of the State school system which still stands; the impulse towards a universal minimum instruction, for the acceptance of the supremacy of the humanities in education, for the spreading among all working classes of the benefits of science applied to technique, and for the free development of thought and research in the universities, has worked powerfully throughout eighty difficult years.

## *Chapter Four*

### THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLITERACY

**D**URING the six first decades of the Kingdom of Italy there has hardly been any problem so persistently taken in hand by statesmen as that of raising the Italian people to the level of the more advanced nations by means of education. Emilio Broglio, before becoming Minister for Public Instruction, had written that 'the unceasing discussions in Parliament are a proof of the great interest everybody brings to this most important public service, and at the same time of the utmost difficulty confronting those who aim at reaching fully the ends set before them by people who hold the most widely divergent views on the subject of instruction. Not everybody claims to be an expert in finance, trade, justice, religious cults, public works, war, and naval and police matters; but everybody has his own plan and programme for education, trusting that it is enough to have been a good schoolboy and to know just a little about a variety of matters to feel entitled to make laws for the schools.' These words applied more, perhaps, to the future than to the time when they were written. But arising out of all those discussions, or side by side with them, there was a great amount of work done both by the State and other bodies, and by individuals.

It is not easy to extricate from the maze of legislative measures, discussions, and proposals some tendencies showing a clear development of thought and practice. The following seem, however, to be the main problems for which a solution was steadily sought from the time of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy down to 1922, and, we can safely say, down to the present day: (*a*) the fight against illiteracy; (*b*) the spreading of post-elementary and vocational instruction; (*c*) the promotion of physical education; (*d*) the preservation and improvement of humanistic and scientific culture; and (*e*) a lay faith for this universal and specialized education to produce men fit for modern life. It is, of course, impossible to sever these problems one from another if the facts are to be understood each in its entirety; but the history of those sixty years may be clearer if these points are emphasized.

Provision had been made for compulsory instruction, as we have seen, by Casati; good results were soon achieved, but the principle that all children should have at the very least two years'

schooling was not to materialize fully until practical methods of bringing it about had been authoritatively suggested. It was not enough to proclaim in each of the new States annexed to the Piedmontese Kingdom that the law of 1859 had to be faithfully observed; the law of 10 March 1860 for the Tuscan provinces, the Pro-dictatorial Decree of 17 October 1860 for Sicily, and the Decree-Law of 7 January 1861 for the Neapolitan provinces gave hardly any help to those who wanted to see a great number of new schools set up. A general regulation was published towards the end of 1860 by the Minister for Public Instruction, Terenzio Mamiani, in which he tried to meet the practical obstacles; public and private bodies were advised and authorized to appoint non-qualified teachers on a larger scale than before, women were allowed to teach in schools for boys, and the communes were to be free to choose whatever means they thought appropriate for the foundation and governing of schools. This road, however, would have led sooner to the deterioration of elementary instruction than to its universal diffusion. The years that followed are filled with analyses, proposals, enactments, and recommendations both on details and on the whole problem; and if it is true that more was talked than done it is because the flood of words is an endemic characteristic of Italians; but this spate of words did not prevent the accomplishment of what the ruling class, and perhaps the majority of persons interested in public affairs, thought necessary and was within the available means.

The communes were under the obligation to provide schools and teachers; and the State had to see that they fulfilled their task. For many of them poverty was a great obstacle; in others the need for a rudimentary instruction did not seem so urgent or real to the administrators, and slackness, or even opposition, slowed down or stopped action. The Coppino law of 1877 and the Credaro law of 1911 were the two decisive stages on the way to making the obligation effective. The Royal Commission set up in January 1861 to prepare a law for the whole Kingdom led to a bill on compulsory education which was not even discussed in Parliament; in 1862 the Minister Matteucci warmly recommended the communes to look after the schools entrusted to them; but in 1868 Minister Broglio published a report on the state of elementary education drawn up by a Commission appointed by the Senate; the appalling conditions in many provinces called for new regulations. After proposals by a special Commission in 1870, Minister Correnti in 1872, Minister Scialoja in 1873, and Minister Bonghi in 1875 had failed to pass through the Houses, and the decision reached in 1874 about school fees for well-to-do families had been turned down in a few days,



Minister Coppino succeeded in getting his plan adopted in 1877. He had followed in the steps of the British Education Act of 1870 in that compulsion for the local bodies was to be applied gradually, having regard to the different conditions in different places. Nearly one-fifth of the communes were dispensed from the obligation of opening schools for everybody, but a stricter control was assured over those which had the means of doing so. The principle was re-stated that education of the first grade must be free; and parents who did not send their children to school were threatened with fines up to ten lire (eight shillings).

The Credaro law of 4 June 1911 was the result of long experience, interminable debates, and the extensive and detailed survey of the elementary schools ordered in 1907 and published in 1910. The communes, except those of the larger towns, were recognized as bodies too weak for the burden imposed on them. Long before, Gino Capponi had advised that Great Britain should be imitated as regards the contribution of the State to education; in 1895 a proposal had been put forward by two members of Parliament that the schools should be taken over by the State; the control of the State over local bodies had been persistently increased and rendered more effective by many decrees regarding the Provincial Supervisors, Inspectors, Directors, and Provincial Scholastic Councils; but the initiative had remained with the communes, because the funds for the schools were provided by them. By the revolutionary law of 1911 the administration of elementary education was transferred to the central authorities in the great majority of communes. The sixty-nine communes of the *capoluoghi di provincia* (County Towns) and others of cities of some importance (*capoluoghi di circondario*) were allowed to carry on their administration in educational matters as before, if they found it possible. All the others had to surrender it to the Provincial Scholastic Council in which the State was represented by the Provincial School Supervisor (*Provveditore*), acting as chairman, and other members, and local interests were represented by members elected by the communes and the Provincial Administrative Council. A *Delegazione Governativa* watched over the activities of the Council, which had to administer all the funds contributed in a fixed proportion by the communes and the State.

State intervention was urgently needed for the upkeep of the schools. The communes had to pay the teachers; and although the salaries were extremely low, the local budgets could hardly be burdened with the cost of building suitable premises. The great majority of schools were quartered in rooms inadequate in number and in size, and too often unhealthy. Help from the

Government came rather slowly, but increased steadily; it was not, however, intended to release the communes from the duty of paying for the schools; and short or long-term loans were granted to them for this purpose. In 1878, 1888, and 1900, bills were passed to this effect for the whole country; in 1906 the provinces of southern Italy and of the islands benefited from the special laws aimed at bringing those unfortunate parts of the Kingdom up to the same level as the rest. But in this respect also the State's greatest effort was made in 1911, when the Credaro law provided for 240 million lire (nearly ten million pounds) to be appropriated for the purpose of helping the communes with loans in the following twenty years.

Teachers were being recruited more and more steadily from the men and women who had attended the two or three forms of the Normal Schools. Even these, however, had a very poor education by the time they had finished their studies, unless the teaching provided in those three years was supplemented in some other way. The most serious drawback was that, according to the Casati rules, aspirants to the teaching profession entered the Normal Schools at about the age of fifteen, after having interrupted their studies for several years; no attendance at any school was required between the fourth Elementary form and the first Normal; and while a number of boys used to attend the first classes of the 'Gymnasium' or Technical Schools, most of the girls waited at home until it was time to go to the Normal School. Furthermore, the number of Normal Schools was insufficient, and the fact that they were generally situated in towns hindered many young people from attending the classes. In 1870, when Correnti was Minister for Public Instruction, a preparatory course lasting two years was annexed to each Normal School for girls; in 1889 similar courses were set up also in the Normal Schools for boys (they were, however, abolished in 1893) and prolonged to three years. In 1877 a great number of Rural Normal Schools (*Scuole Magistrali Rurali*) with two forms only were set up in smaller centres in order to attract boys and girls from the countryside; this was part of Coppino's campaign against illiteracy. But a general settlement of the question of training schools for elementary teachers was not reached till 1896. The Gianturco law of 12 July 1896, determined that the schools of this type for girls should consist of six forms divided into two three-year courses, the *Scuola Complementare* entered from the elementary schools, and the Normal School; the boys' Normal Schools were to be entered after three years' attendance at other secondary schools; the *Scuole Magistrali Rurali* were abolished, and, where the number of pupils was high enough,

replaced by complete *Scuole Complementari e Normali*; every Normal School was to have an elementary school and a kindergarten attached. The importance and dignity of these schools was emphasized a few days later by a law putting the teachers of the *Scuole Complementari e Normali* on the same level as those of the 'Gymnasiums' and Lyceums. In order to increase the number of male teachers, who were becoming too small a proportion in comparison with women, special *Corsi Magistrali* were started in many places where there existed isolated 'Gymnasiums' ('Gymnasiums' without the corresponding Lyceums).

The recruitment of teachers for elementary schools was not facilitated by the financial side of the teaching profession, so long as the salaries suggested by the law of 1859 were not substantially increased. If it was comparatively easy to find girls ready to accept wages of little more than a pound a month, since it was practically the only way for them to earn anything at all, boys were deterred by such prospects, even if their rates were higher by one-third. Moreover, many communes did not respect the minimum imposed by the law, so that the better teachers avoided appointments in badly paid localities; the more so when the decree of 1862 legalized this practice. In 1865, however, the communes were called upon to keep to the minimum; in 1876 an increase of 10 per cent in the wages was granted; in 1866 and in 1878 a scheme for old-age pensions was put into force; still higher increases followed, until the Credaro law of 1911 gave the teachers the feeling that they were, from the financial point of view, something better than the outcasts of society.

Until 1888 the elementary schools consisted of four forms at most; children who had attended two forms with satisfactory results were in most cases released from their obligations, and those whose families wanted them to stay at school longer than four years and had no opportunity of sending them either to Technical Schools or to 'Gymnasiums', had to join, during the supplementary period, the children of the fourth form. The general regulation for primary education issued by Minister Boselli in 1888 extended the lower course to three forms, and no child was to leave school before that period, while the examination for admission to the secondary schools was to be taken after the fifth form. In 1904 a further step was taken; the law of 8 July ordered some communes and invited others to set up a sixth form. This one, together with the fifth, instituted in 1888, formed the *Scuola Popolare*; a solution was thus attempted for the problem of having a longer period of elementary instruction for those classes whose children were not supposed to go on to secondary schools. Admission to these, on the other hand, was

permitted, as before 1888, after the fourth form. Further impulse was given to a longer period of school attendance by the 1882 electoral law denying the right of voting to those who had not been regularly released from their scholastic duties, by the 1902 law prohibiting child labour under the thirteenth year, by the manifold rules for examinations in elementary schools, and by the raising from three to six years of the period of compulsory attendance wherever suitable schools existed, in accordance with the law of 8 July 1904.

The number of illiterate adults, though diminishing as a consequence of compulsory education, was going down too slowly. Several communes and other bodies opened evening or Sunday schools for adults; but not much was to be expected from the communes, because of financial difficulties. The 1904 law provided for three thousand such schools to be set up by the State, and boys not accepted on medical or other grounds as soldiers were to be compelled to attend them; the special law for the southern provinces of 1906 provided for two thousand more. The regimental schools which had flourished for some time were abolished in 1892, to the great disadvantage of illiterate soldiers; a remedy was found in the provisions of the 1911 law and of the decree of 2 August 1913, according to which military instruction includes, for those who need them, regular courses of elementary education.

Private initiative developed on two lines which met with great success. In 1888 the first *Patronato scolastico* was founded; it was a voluntary body grouping private persons and societies and public organizations with the aim of helping, materially and morally, the welfare and progress of the elementary schools; poor children received books, clothes, and meals; and classes in need of furniture were provided with it. The usefulness of these *Patronati* was officially recognized in the decree of 8 April 1897, their number grew quickly (by 1900 there were already 1,200 of them), and the subsequent laws of 1904 and 1911 gave them the character of public bodies subsidiary to the scholastic organization in all communes. Other activities of ever-increasing importance were those connected with the actual teaching and founding of schools in all places where the State and communes could not or would not reach. Among many people of initiative one should remember Giovanni Cena, a writer and poet, who in the first years of this century started a number of classes for the derelict population of the Roman Campagna; his example was followed by other pioneers, among them Angelo Celli and Leopoldo Franchetti. Their initiative spread more and more, till it was finally recognized by the Government; in 1919 the *Ente Nazionale*

*per gli adulti analfabeti* was officially founded, and entrusted with the instruction of illiterate adults and children of the dispersed population. This *Ente* was replaced in 1921 by the *Opera contro l'analfabetismo*, which had as its branches several associations formed under the impulse of Cena's followers, such as the *Scuole per i contadini dell'Agro Romano*, the *Società Umanitaria*, the *Consorzio Nazionale per l'Emigrazione e il Lavoro*, the *Associazione degli Interessi del Mezzogiorno d'Italia*; a new body was set up immediately after the war for the newly annexed provinces, the *Italia Redenta*.

The results of this long fight are difficult to estimate; statistics are unfortunately not the best measure of educational and cultural progress, but they can give an approximate idea of how far the minimum instruction was given and received. In 1907, out of 3,949,141 children bound to attend school, just over three million were enrolled; this figure is made up of 1,260,317 children in the first form, 856,587 in the second, 607,317 in the third, 181,323 in the fourth, 77,875 in the fifth, 18,749 in the sixth. Attendance was irregular, especially in the southern provinces, where not more than half the enrolled children were still at school at the end of the school year. In 1922 almost four million out of 4,800,000 children were enrolled and about 80 per cent of these attended regularly. The percentage of illiterates over the whole population fell from 73 per cent in 1871 to 12 per cent in 1930. No reliable figures can be given to show how many of these five million illiterates were the residue of the large proportion of people who had had no instruction in their childhood several decades ago, and how many of them were young people who, even in the years immediately before the census was taken, had no opportunity of going to school; but it is fair to assume that only a very small percentage of the boys and girls born about and after 1910 lacked any instruction. In fact, the battle against total illiteracy had been almost won before 1922; the task was left for the future years to bring it to an end and to win the battle against semi-illiteracy.

## *Chapter Five*

### VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTION FOR THE MASSES

THE principle that as many people as possible must be schooled in the special field in which they would have to work came next only to the dogma that everybody must be able, at least, to write his own name. The democratic rule of giving the people the advantages of science and culture found an ally in the urgent need for quickening the progress of a modern economy in the backward peninsula and islands of Italy. The creative power of the organizers of public education in Italy between 1860 and 1922 was kept busy by the needs of vocational training more than by anything else; collaboration between the State and other bodies for educational purposes has been nowhere more active than in this respect. It was due to the insight of such men as Quintino Sella that the cultural side of economic interests was given great prominence from the beginning; the Ministry for Agriculture, Industries and Trade, set up in 1860, was by the end of 1861 entrusted with the supervision of this branch of education; in spite of the disadvantages of having two 'boards of education', this measure proved beneficial both to economy and culture. Action was directed along several lines: the most fruitful work was done in regard to schools for arts, crafts, and industry.

For the first years the part taken by the Ministry of Agriculture was restricted to the foundation of a number of schools, the support given to private initiative, the control exercised through temporary inspectors, and the setting up of Chambers of Commerce to deal with economic matters, which were to have a say in questions touching vocational instruction. The first attempt to settle the State-wide organization of all these schools was made when Cairoli was Minister in 1879; the Chambers of Commerce were asked to take a more active part in starting new schools, and the establishments coming under the control of the Supreme Council for Technical Instruction had their administrative and teaching independence guaranteed by the State when once they were recognized to be worthy of it. Ministerial commissions were appointed at different times for the purpose of inquiring into the needs of professional instruction; suggestions by congresses of educationists and industrialists, such as that of 1880 in Rome, were followed by prompt action on the part of

the Government. In 1885 the first official syllabuses for a variety of schools of arts and crafts were published; in 1905 Giolitti, as Minister for Home Affairs, asked the voluntary and local bodies administering charitable institutions for boys and girls to reorganize them and give them professional aims. Although the results of these measures were quite good, so that in 1905 there existed nearly three hundred schools of an artistic industrial character receiving help from the State and nearly four hundred completely autonomous, a wider control by the State, more detailed directives, and a greater number of schools seemed to be necessary if the large masses of skilled workers needed for the progress of modern industry were to be trained. Between 1908 and 1917 all matters affecting the schools for arts and industry were subjected to multifarious legislation bringing them on the same footing as most of the other secondary schools; the law of 14 July 1912 determined the various grades of schools, the salaries for teachers, and the degrees and certificates given at the end of the several courses. During the first four years after the World War, interest was mainly directed towards the foundation of training centres for ex-servicemen and workers; and a general reform was envisaged which would give a more popular character to most industrial schools of the first grade; the proposals of the Commission appointed in 1921 for the reorganization of these schools formed the basis of several changes brought about in subsequent years. The number of pupils in schools of this kind, both supported and not supported by the State, was little less than 100,000 in 1922.

Second in importance to the schools of art and industry were the agricultural schools. When the importance of agriculture to Italy is considered, it can hardly be said that sufficient attention was paid to the need for such schools. In 1876 the first agricultural school with a definite cultural character was founded in Conegliano (*Scuola Media di Agricoltura*); it was, and is still in a way, a model oenological school. It was soon followed (in 1877) by the school of Reggio Emilia, which specialized in cattle-breeding and cheese-making. Other schools of a similar kind, specializing in various subjects, were founded a few years later at Avellino, Alba, Brescia, Catania, and at Cagliari. The practical schools of agriculture of an elementary and post-elementary grade were improved and slightly increased in numbers, but by 1922 there were not more than twenty-seven such schools controlled by the State in all Italy. The law of 6 June 1885, n. 3141, gave a uniform administration to the two types of schools, and brought them on a level with the commercial and industrial secondary schools. The practical schools were, in accordance with the law,

to train boys between 13 and 17 belonging to families of small land owners; but they did not give access to higher schools. The 'Special Schools' might have a lower course of three years, followed by one lasting four years, and might give access to the High Schools of Agriculture of Pisa, Milan, and Portici, and later on to that of Perugia (founded in 1896). In order to supplement the few agricultural schools, the Ministry encouraged the communes to spread some knowledge of agriculture in the elementary schools. After a campaign in this direction, due mainly to the Minister Baccelli, there were in 1900 about 4,000 schools with their own small plot cultivated by the children.

The commercial schools with a definitely practical character are quite recent. Till 1902 only local bodies had been interested in this kind of instruction and support from the State had been very slight; in that year the Minister for Agriculture, Baccelli, following a motion by the Chamber of Commerce in Rome, set up in the capital a *Scuola Media per applicati al Commercio*; soon other schools of the same type were either founded or taken under State control. In 1908 all existing commercial practical schools were brought under one order; the Commercial School, lasting three years (increased to four in 1916), trained boys and girls between 10 and 15 years of age for work in trades requiring a lower degree of education; the Commercial Institute of four forms completed the instruction given in the Commercial School for those who aimed at more important appointments. As for agricultural education there was a parallel course of studies, of a less practical character, in the Technical Institute; and the instruction given in the Technical School was considered sufficient, in most cases, for minor jobs with commercial firms.

The Technical School did not change much after its foundation; it remained under the control of the Ministry of Public Instruction, and in this way preserved very much the character of something between a popular school of general culture and a course for the training of clerks and lower-grade employees for all kinds of offices. A certain number of them had become specialized, an even larger number had added to the usual subjects some complementary studies in order to allow the children or their families to choose a more definite career. Its hybrid character, which has already been pointed out, of a post-elementary school complete in itself, and of a lower course preparing for the Technical Institute, was the cause of endless discussions. The more technical schools of a lower grade which, as we have seen, were created in those sixty years, and the growth of the higher course of the elementary schools into a proper *Scuola Popolare*, were threatening the very existence of an independent



institute of the type of the Technical School. Much of the struggle around a *Scuola Unica*, i.e., a unique type of lower secondary school, was prompted by the ambiguity of the Technical School. This was, however, very typical of the state of Italian education in the last eighty years; it represented the aspirations of a vast class aiming not only at the acquisition of a better standard of living through an improved technical skill, but at an improvement, however small, in general culture.

## Chapter Six

### ‘MENS SANA IN CORPORE SANO’

PHYSICAL education had not been considered important enough by the founders and organizers of the Italian school system for them to include it in the curricula. Physical training was either left to voluntary bodies (*Società Ginnastiche, Palestre*, etc.), of which a considerable number had come into being especially in northern Italy during the *Risorgimento*, or it was strictly connected with military service. In fact, very few boys had any kind of practice in gymnastics and games before they were called up; and girls took no exercise whatever. Even some kind of military training given to students in Lyceums was dropped soon after the *Lex Casati*. Something was done in this direction only in the boarding schools (*Convitti Nazionali*) annexed to Lyceums and ‘Gymnasiums’; but it was little and irregular.

The drive for a ‘hygienic life’ had its repercussions in the schools in two ways; the conditions of life inside the schools underwent a slow but steady improvement, and gymnastics became a compulsory item in all curricula of elementary and secondary schools. Outside the schools, physical training and travel were encouraged; it can be said that in the sixty years of democratic life in Italy, the contribution to education coming from private individuals and bodies was in no field as extensive as in this one. Side by side with the Church, the State-controlled educational system, and the family, there grew up the new kind of collective education for people of all ages, centred on the principle *mens sana in corpore sano*.

The first decision to introduce physical education into the schools was taken by the Minister of Public Instruction, Francesco De Sanctis. It was considered to be a great step towards the ‘modernization’ of Italian education; and it is significant that the greatest critic and historian of Italian literature, one of the founders of philosophical idealism in Italy, should have tried to bring together in the schools culture of the mind and culture of the body, and started a process which proved very difficult of achievement and has not yet been carried to a satisfactory conclusion. The law of 7 July 1878 enacted that ‘educational gymnastics are compulsory in all secondary, normal, and elementary schools; in the schools for boys they also aim at

preparing them for military service'. The students of Normal Schools had also to learn some theoretical precepts in educational gymnastics which would enable them to become good teachers of this subject in the elementary schools. Special summer courses were started for teachers, both men and women, in order that they might introduce such teaching into their schools as soon as possible; ex-servicemen could attend these courses and become teachers of gymnastics in secondary schools. It took some time before these rules were applied all over the country; and a number of special regulations were issued from time to time urging that physical education should really become an essential part of the training of young people. Special attention was paid to supplementing the physical training in gymnasia by means of excursions; these had to serve the double purpose of training the body and awakening the attention to natural phenomena. In this connexion the *Festa degli alberi* should be remembered. The need to spread an interest in forests and woods, in which Italy was becoming poorer every year, prompted Baccelli, when he was Minister, to suggest that excursions should be organized every year by every school to some place where the children themselves could plant small trees and take care of them. This suggestion was followed in many places with success, and became the origin of numerous other excursions in which teaching in the open was attempted or practised regularly.

All matters connected with physical education in the schools were dealt with and stabilized by the law of 26 December 1909 and the complementary decree of 20 December 1910. The results aimed at by these regulations were of a much more ambitious character, and entailed a real encroachment on the normal arrangement of education. It was stated in Article 2 of the law that 'physical education includes games, rifle target-practice, choral chant and all other educational exercises for the strengthening of the body and the formation of character'. Half an hour every day had to be set apart for this training in the elementary schools, and three hours every week in the secondary schools; not less than once a month an excursion was to be organized to a place of historic, artistic, or scientific interest, to which the pupils should be led by the teacher of gymnastics and of the subjects for which the excursion was of some interest. No pupil could be admitted to a higher form in his school or be released at the end of his studies, unless he was adjudged proficient in gymnastics. Gymnasia had to be set up in all buildings used for secondary schools; private establishments were not allowed to give education of a regular standard, unless they could provide physical training as well.

Three high schools of gymnastics had been founded towards the end of the nineteenth century—in Rome, Turin, and Naples; in 1909 they were transformed into training colleges for teachers in secondary schools. No one was to be admitted to those colleges without having obtained the final certificate either at a Lyceum, Normal School, or Technical Institute. The teachers in secondary schools were to be put on the same footing and have the same rights as teachers of other subjects. These methods aimed at raising the status of the teaching of gymnastics, which was rather looked down on in the intellectual surroundings in which it was given. It was, however, not more than a start, or rather an experiment. In spite of these regulations, gymnastics remained on the whole a less-than-second-rate subject in the schools; the interests of all but a few teachers were directed on lines too divergent from those of the integral mind-and-body education. Pupils did not take that teaching seriously, and both families and teachers of other subjects were inclined to think of the hours devoted to gymnastics as lost time. The fact that the 'masters of gymnastics', or 'professors of physical training' as they were styled later on, had generally a much lower standard of general culture caused them to be merely tolerated by their colleagues, and as a consequence they were often despised by their pupils. An attempt was made in 1921 to give a new standing to physical education in the schools; it was to be more independent of the other subjects than it used to be; but the change was merely external; the substance remained the same.

The number of associations and groups promoting physical training in one way or another grew steadily and quickly throughout the whole period we are now considering; and it is impossible to estimate the extent to which they actually influenced the character of the younger generation. Some of them, however, played such an important part in spreading the passion for sports and popularizing the idea of a healthy life based on the harmonious strength of the body, and the beneficial effects of the open air, that it is necessary to mention them briefly. The most important among these organizations were the *Touring Club Italiano*, the *Club Alpino Italiano*, the *Giovani Esploratori*, and the *Unione Operaia Escursionisti Italiani*.

The *Touring Club Italiano* (T.C.I.) was founded in 1894 as a society which aimed at spreading the new sport of cycling (*Touring Club Ciclistico Italiano*, T.C.C.I.). The number of members grew from 784 in 1894 to 20,000 in 1900, and 200,000 in 1922. Groups were organized almost everywhere among members; excursions by bicycle and on foot in small or large parties became more and more frequent. Groups for students of

secondary schools were favoured, and direct knowledge of the beauties of the countryside was promoted among them by the monthly magazine *La Sorgente*. But the greatest educational influence on people of all ages and classes was exercised by the T.C.I. through the publication of magazines, maps, and guide-books distributed free or almost free to all the members. The *Rivista del Touring*, and later on the *Vie d'Italia*, made known to hundreds of thousands of Italians, through articles and photographs, the natural and artistic beauties of their country and spurred them to go and see them. The *Guida d'Italia* improved on the Baedekers and constituted for everybody an indispensable means of becoming acquainted with the nearer and remoter parts of Italy; while the *Carta d'Italia al 1:250,000* brought a detailed geographical knowledge and an interest in topography to many places where hardly anything was known beyond what was taught in the elementary schools.

The *Club Alpino Italiano* (C.A.I.) was older than the T.C.I. Its activities were naturally more restricted, being directed to spreading the love of mountaineering; but the influence it had was of a deeper significance, since the training which young people were called to undergo was harder and the interest in natural beauty purer. The university section of the C.A.I. (S.U.C.A.I.) ranked among the best associations of students; it was in the excursions and camps of the S.U.C.A.I., more than anywhere else, that the education of the body came to be a healthy complement to intellectual training.

The 'Young Explorers' was the only country-wide institution of a militarized character for boys under military age. The 'National Corps of Young Explorers' was founded a few years before the World War on the lines of the Boy Scouts of Baden-Powell. Although it was an organization independent of the State, the protection granted by the King and by the Ministry of War made of it an organ that could easily be used for military purposes. It soon became quite popular among the upper and upper-middle class; and tens of thousands of boys found in it all the manifold training which had no place in the schools. Its life, however, was too short to allow of any judgement on its influence over education on a broad scale. Its lay character, although not excluding some collaboration with religious activities, prompted the ecclesiastical authorities to promote a parallel institution, the 'Young Catholic Explorers', which very soon won great popularity, especially among the lower classes of the population. While it had in common with the *Corpo Nazionale* the ideals of self-reliance, social-consciousness, and friendly military obedience, it was directed rather to fostering a religious

fraternity through sport than a technical preparedness to meet the practical difficulties of life with courage and a civic sense.

Among the societies which gave to the masses of workers the opportunities of physical training, the most numerous were perhaps the 'Society of Excursionists'. Every centre of any importance had its group; many of them were united in the *Unione Operaia Escursionisti Italiani* (U.O.E.I.) which was founded in 1911 and, before it was dissolved in 1926, grouped together tens of thousands of workers, regardless of political opinion. The mounting tide of enthusiasm for all kinds of sport gave origin to and was strengthened by other nation-wide associations, such as the *Federazione Ginnastica Italiana*, the *Federazione Italiana Sports Atletici*, the *Federazione Italiana per il Gioco del Calcio*, the *Federazione Italiana Rari Nantes*, the *Regio Automobile Club d'Italia*, the *Lega Navale*, the *Lega Aerea Nazionale*, the *Regio Rowing Club Italiano*, and many others.

## Chapter Seven

### HUMANISTIC AND SCIENTIFIC INSTRUCTION

THE 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum was the secondary school *par excellence*. No type of school was subjected to fewer changes between 1859 and 1923, and throughout the long discussions on the reform of education it was taken for granted by nearly everybody that the fundamental features of these institutes should remain unchanged. It was accepted almost universally that a good education for those who could not afford or did not want private teachers was to be had only in the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum. It was the only school to give access to the universities for all Faculties. The Faculty of Law was open only to former students of the Lyceum; and if one thinks of the fields which were open to those who graduated in Law, it is easy to see what importance the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum had as a preparation for public life and in the formation of a ruling class. Most high officials of the administration were required to possess this degree; so that the Civil Service was very largely in the hands of Doctors of Law. The professions to which this degree led were a training in the art of persuasion, most important in the Italian party democracy. The number of members of Parliament of all parties who were *avvocati* was very high indeed. Most teachers in secondary schools, and all teachers of Italian, Latin, History, and Philosophy, must necessarily have studied in 'Gymnasium'-Lyceums, so that schools of other kinds were also largely influenced by the 'spirit' of the classical schools. A great proportion of the medical doctors came from the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum; and so did a considerable section of the graduate engineers. Even writers and newspaper editors usually came from that type of school. It was therefore not only a sign of *esprit de corps* when the old boys of the Lyceum showed pride in their education; they saw that the most prominent positions in life were occupied by themselves and their colleagues. The reasons for this privileged position are to be found to a large extent in the regulations requiring for many careers a qualification obtained only through that school, partly in the education itself, which was, apparently, more suited than that given in other schools to bring success in Italian life at the time, partly to the traditional respect for the classical school, and finally to the kind of people who could afford to send their children to it.

The cost of Italian schools was, and has always remained, very low; and the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum, though a little more expensive than other schools, and with fewer opportunities for scholarships than the Normal School, was no exception. But the school fees were not the main item in the cost of education; nor were books, although the number of books every student was expected to own was quite high. The main problem, in which the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum differed from the other schools, is that it led to no qualification before the studies were completed in the university. To send a boy of ten to the 'Gymnasium' meant a decision on the part of the parents to keep him at school till about his twenty-second or twenty-third year, with no prospect of any good career if his studies were interrupted at an earlier age. The Technical Institute, the Normal School, and the Technical School opened by themselves the way to many careers, even though not the highest. This class distinction based on the financial capacity of the family did not mean that all the richer young people crowded the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum; and many quite poor families of the upper-middle class, with traditions of refinement and culture, were ready to make great sacrifices in order to give a classical education to their children.

This finer culture which the students acquired at the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum was mainly based on the study of Latin and Greek, Italian language and literature, and history. Though the classical languages were meant and were said to give the 'humanistic' spirit to young people, they lacked much of what is really humanist in the way they were taught. It became more and more the rule that Latin and Greek were studied as a training of the mind, somewhat similar to the training given by the study of logic and mathematics. An interest in the rules and irregularities of phonetics, morphology, and syntax took the place of interest in the language itself as it was used to express the lofty thought and imagination of the classical writers. In spite of five or eight years of hard work, almost all students found it impossible, without the help of a dictionary, to read quite easy passages in Latin, much less Greek. Only in exceptional cases would any former student of the classical schools find pleasure in reading Latin and Greek prose and poetry, or even possess the ability to do so without great difficulty. Nor was anyone able to use the classical languages for any literary or scientific purpose. Latin composition had disappeared from the schools, whether in prose or in verse; and the difficulty of the Greek vocabulary and verb-forms seemed such an insurmountable obstacle that the very idea of expressing one's mind in this language appeared quite impossible. The few texts read in the upper classes of the



'Gymnasium' and in the Lyceum—Homer, Horace, Xenophon and Herodotus, Livy and Tacitus, Sophocles and Virgil and a few others—were read only in fragments (one book of Homer, one of Virgil, a few Odes, etc.), and were primarily a training ground for the study of syntax or tests of the students' knowledge of the irregular verbs and dialect forms of the Greek. The poetical metres were learnt mechanically; attention was paid to stresses and the numbers of syllables, but no care was taken to read long and short syllables, which are foreign to Italian speech, so that the musical element of poetry disappeared. Very little of the world surrounding the classical authors and expressed in their works was revealed to the students, who, in the Lyceum, had to recollect what they had learnt about the political history of Greece and Rome in past years from a text-book generally unaccompanied by any reading of passages from ancient authors.

This method of study aimed at producing in the pupils the habit of expressing personal ideas clearly. Latin and Greek had a 'formative' value, in the mind of most teachers, because the study of these languages required a long training in the analysis of speech. The young students started in the elementary schools with some 'grammatical analysis' and 'logical analysis', which was continued more intensively in the lower forms of the 'Gymnasium'. The Italian language was dissected, very often on the *corpus vile* of the best Italian writers, into sentences, clauses, parts of clauses; and these were classified into the traditional grammatical and syntactic schemes of Latin; whether these classifications fitted the Italian language or not, the important thing was that they fitted the Latin; without them no study of Latin or Greek would be successful. For the student of the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum the books which stand out in his memory as the most important for the study of the classical languages are the grammars and the dictionaries. Most of them were either translations and adaptations from the German, or imitations of German standard school-books. Schultz's and Madvig's Latin grammars and Georges' Latin dictionary have dominated Italian schools for several decades; the Latin grammar by an Italian author, G. Zenoni, which enjoyed the highest circulation, was a more complicated recast of those German models. For Greek, the grammars used were translations of Curtius' and Kaegi's German works or again Zenoni's imitations and adaptations; while Schenkl's dictionary and Greek exercises adapted to Italian were in the hands of many students. This resulted in mental gymnastics in language, but not in thinking in Latin or Greek or in a classic outlook as regards form and content. Cicero was a marvellous builder of sentences, Tacitus a bold aggressor against

syntax and *concinnitas*. There was, of course, still room for students to enjoy, under the guidance of the best teachers, the beauties of the languages and the literary works; so that a discriminating taste for the classics and a sense of what they meant to civilization did not disappear altogether. But this was by no means on such a scale as might have been expected from the many classical schools in which the *élite* of the Italian youth were brought up.

The teaching of Italian was, of course, of a different character, although, as has been mentioned, the grammatical elements of the language were taught on the Latin model and as an introduction to this language. Some attention was still given to rhetoric; the many rhetorical forms to be found in literary works, classified in the traditional way, constituted one of the most abstract parts of teaching, because their importance to a 'noble' style was by no means realized in practice. Students were trained to write, mainly by means of frequent short essays, in class or at home. These essays might be very different in character; but most often they were something between purely rhetorical experiments on stereotyped topics, moral and social, and the description of personal experiences and feelings. Even in the latter cases, however, little stress was put on the truth of the related facts, and on the economical way of conveying the knowledge of things as they are; it was usually more important that the syntax should be correct, and the words chosen not too colloquial nor borrowed from the local dialects. A pompous style rich in adjectives with vague meanings, reflecting half-romantic enthusiasms for human brotherhood, friendship and country, natural and artistic beauty, and the greatness of great men was much more in vogue in the schools than care for the propriety of words and sincerity of ideas and feelings. To this, perhaps, contributed the fact that the pupils read and studied much more poetry than prose, and lacked, therefore, models of writing that could be imitated. On the other hand this very familiarity with the greatest products of poetical genius was perhaps the best side of this school humanism. Although Dante and Petrarch, Ariosto and Tasso and Manzoni lost the best of their charm in the minds and hearts of many young people precisely because they had to be 'studied', and the pupils had to be 'interrogated' on them, it is a fact that such interest in Italian literature as survived was due very much to the place it had in the curriculum of secondary schools.

This 'humanism' had, therefore, a double limitation, in that it was in a way very formalistic, as regards the study of the classical languages, and rather restricted to national traditions. The universal character acquired in the course of centuries by Greek

and Roman culture, and the more universal fact of Christianity, remained very much in the background. Nor did the study of history, as it was practised, widen the horizon of education very much. But there was no narrow nationalism in it; and the history of other countries was not totally excluded from the curricula and books of the time. The universalism of the Holy Roman Empire and of the 'rights of men' as asserted in the French Revolution were by no means depreciated; nor was Roman history transformed into an introduction to the rebirth of Roman and Italian greatness. But a sense of proportion between the parts played by Italy and by other nations in the history of human values was not by any means maintained. Philosophy was little more than tolerated and failed to give any foundation for a loftier outlook on human problems.

The sciences played a subordinate part in the classical schools. There was, however, enough mathematics, nature study, physics, and chemistry to give an orientation in these several fields. Mathematics was mainly theoretical; the Euclidean method and order were the rule in geometry; arithmetic and algebra were similarly taught from the standpoint of training the mind to reason, not to solve practical problems. In the mind of many students, mathematics was associated with Latin, in their likes and dislikes, and especially in their difficulties, because the mental effort required for both was of the same kind. On the other hand physics, chemistry, and nature study were taught almost exclusively in an experimental way. It was only through them that the observation was trained and that the scientific attitude could be developed. The growing claims of modern science, however, did not find easy acceptance in the classical schools, which had other values and traditions to preserve. And the time had not come, and has apparently not yet come, for a new synthesis which will provide the main lines of an educational plan in which science and *litterae humanae* go well together. It became necessary, therefore, to develop 'scientific' schools side by side with the 'classical'; and, in consequence of the value of science in modern life, this type of education was considered to be of a more practical character and to lead more directly to practice in the several professions, industry, and commerce. This accounts for the development of the Physics and Mathematics Section in the Technical Institute and for the foundation of the Modern Lyceum side by side with the Classical Lyceum.

The Technical Institute acquired a new character when the 'scientific' section became more important than the other sections. It had its origin in the need for preparing 'technicians' and experts for industry, trade, and agriculture; and the idea that

it might lead to university studies of a more scientific character was absent at the time of its foundation. But it seemed hard to prevent young people who, when they were ten years of age, had chosen, or had been forced into, the Technical School, from having any chance of getting university education; equally it was not wholly reasonable that graduated engineers, physicists, and teachers of mathematics should be recruited only among people with a classical education. The Physics and Mathematics Section became a kind of Lyceum with very little 'humanistic' education, but was still based more on the idea of a culture unaffected by preoccupations with immediate practical activities. The Modern Lyceum was an attempt to bridge the gap between the 'too humanistic' Classical Lyceum and the 'too scientific' Technical Institute. At the beginning of this century there were some attempts to avoid the setting up of a new type of school, by allowing students to substitute the study of a modern language and of more science for the study of Greek. After a few years, however, in 1910 the new school was set up in the form of a compromise between the Classical Lyceum and a kind of *Realschule* of the German and Austrian type. Some of the most important 'Gymnasium'-Lyceums were to have one section reserved for those students who wanted a more 'modern' education. The three lower forms of the 'Gymnasium' remained the same for all; the difference began in the fourth form, where the study of Greek started. The curricula provided for one more language, German or English, to be studied in addition to French; and a programme was fixed for the study of physics, mathematics, and chemistry which was nearer to that of the Physics and Mathematics Section than to that of the Classical 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum.

The two elements, humanistic and scientific education, were less prominent in the Normal Schools. They developed through many changes, and the result was an almost uninterrupted addition of new subjects which were supposed to help in the preparation of the would-be elementary-school teacher. Singing and handwriting, scholastic legislation and hygiene, pedagogics and morals based on a not-too-scientific child-psychology, Italian literature and books for children had to be studied at the same time as biology and history, physics, chemistry and mathematics, handwork, and, for the girls, needlework; and, in the lower course, i.e., the *Complementari*, the French language. The uncertainties which led to the perpetual transformation of this type of school were perhaps due precisely to this dilemma: whether the Normal School should be humanistic or scientific, with a specialization in psychology and educational method.

It can be said, in conclusion, that the ideal type of education was considered to be humanistic, modified by the modern development of science, and influenced by the German methods of abstract study of the classical languages. Side by side with this 'ideal type', represented by the Classical 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum, there came more and more into prominence a 'modern' type of school in which science and modern languages were meant to provide an education not less esteemed than the other and more suited to the present times.

## Chapter Eight

### RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION

THE schools dependent on, or controlled by, the State were lay schools from the very beginning, and became more so in the course of the sixty years preceding Gentile's reform. The theological Faculties in the universities had been closed in 1872. The 'spiritual directors' in the secondary schools also disappeared very soon. Religious teaching in the elementary schools had become voluntary, the decision resting on the local authorities and on the families, and finally had disappeared altogether in most schools, especially in the towns. Not only had the teaching of Roman Catholic doctrine been practically banned from the schools, but even the vague principles which could serve as a basis for any religion were absent from them, so far as official regulations and programmes are taken into account. History was very generously taught in all that concerned Rome and Greece, the great political developments in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the French Revolution, and the Italian *Risorgimento*; and the Church was considered almost solely in its connexions with the temporal powers. What most 'educated' people knew about the monastic orders in the Middle Ages was that they preserved the classical authors and handed them over to posterity without understanding them. The difference between Paganism and Christianity was explained very briefly; a little more was learnt about religious problems in the chapters on the Reformation. Christian authors were not read in Latin because 'they did not write in a language as pure as that of Cicero, Livy or Tacitus'; nor were they read in translation as Homer and Virgil were. Dante was studied as a great poet and the father of the Italian language; his historical background was the subject of some detailed study, but his 'theology' was considered more as a heavy burden hiding or impairing the poetical beauties, than as the spiritual setting in which the poet himself lived. Therefore it was dismissed with a few notes, in which it was regarded as not much more than matter of abstruse allegories. The *Inferno* was the real, great Dante, much more so than the *Paradiso*.

The religious 'problem' might be dealt with briefly in the frame of the study of psychology and ethics in the Classical Lyceum; but even there religion, whether Christian or non-

Christian, was considered as a fact much less worthy of consideration than most other spiritual facts for people who must learn how to understand life and its *raisons d'être*. Even the students training as teachers in elementary schools might have started, and in fact did so in many instances, their 'mission', as they called it, in the deepest ignorance of what religion may mean to children and grown-ups.

A great number of teachers were, of course, practising and believing Christians; and they brought into their teaching something of their spiritual life. But such influence as they might have had was limited by the official syllabuses. And it was quite natural that young people should feel a disturbing difference between the attitude of some teachers and the general trend of their studies. The scepticism which is bound to arise from this situation was enhanced by the openly anti-religious attitude of many teachers and writers of educational books. This scepticism does not appear to have been of the kind that leads to fair consideration and a weighing of the pros and cons of possible solutions of the problems involved. The most frequent consequence was a light and haughty intellectual disregard for religion or a half-resigned acceptance of a non-religious culture side by side with the beliefs learnt in church and at home.

Religious education, however, remained one of the fundamental factors in the bringing up of children, and to some extent of young people up to eighteen years of age. Families which had not abandoned the Church arranged for their children to attend the courses of Christian doctrine, the *dottrina*, in the Parish Church. These courses took children up to their First Communion and Confirmation, and inculcated in young minds the answers of the Roman Catechism. For the great majority of people these foundations, strengthened by prayers, attendance at Mass and other services, and the Sacraments, and regularly recalled to memory by sermons and by friendship with the priests, were the surest basis of their habits, or at least the basis by which they judged and desired to be judged. This applied in particular to the great masses in the countryside, and in many towns as well, especially to those who had not gone beyond an elementary school, and to the illiterates. Apart from this, religious education was the foundation of all other teaching in a good number of elementary schools and perhaps in the majority of the nursery and infant schools which were run by religious orders and institutions. Most of these elementary schools were recognized as equivalent to the corresponding communal schools, their teachers had to be qualified, and they might receive financial help from public bodies.

The children who had finished their pre-Confirmation religious instruction might find a further help to their religious education in the many parish and diocesan organizations, in the 'courses of religious studies' organized in several places by the Church authorities. But this kind of higher religious instruction was by no means as widespread as the *dottrina* for children. Still less was there a large-scale organization for religious studies for lay youths interested in the problems of spiritual life. The 'study-circles' were much rarer than they are now, and perhaps less alive to the problems of everyday life. However, the number of schools run by religious orders and institutions was fairly large; and many of the best private secondary schools, especially 'Gymnasium'-Lyceums and Normal Schools belonged to them. The *Scolopi*, the Barnabites, the Salesians, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, and many other orders and congregations have helped to keep alive religious education, side by side with the humanistic and scientific education required by the State for the school certificates. In these schools the Church proved to be much better able to satisfy practical requirements without renouncing its spiritual values, than were the lay institutions, State or private, to meet the many spiritual needs of a 'free' youth. Many other schools, however, maintained by the Church, were far from keeping pace with the lay schools in preparing students for examinations according to the official curricula and syllabuses, although in course of time many among them found, or were forced to find, their way towards improvements in this direction. These were the seminaries, most of which, especially the smaller ones, also catered for many boys who did not intend to become priests. The education given to these lay pupils aimed at preparing them for the examinations in the State schools and especially in the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum, but was frequently based so much on the methods and subjects necessary for the preparation for the priesthood that the religious education very often appeared as an impediment to success in the lay schools. While the private schools kept by religious orders might be said to have attracted many young people, who would otherwise have gone to lay secondary schools, to an education not divorced from religion, the seminaries offered some 'lay' education to young people who, mainly for financial reasons, would have been left without any post-elementary education at all.

In the higher sphere of education, religion was almost non-existent for lay people. The higher schools of theology and the university institutions of the Church were almost entirely reserved to priests. Degrees obtained there were not recognized for any non-ecclesiastical situation. In the State and private



universities the only homage paid to religious questions was some belatedly instituted teaching of the history of religion, or history of Christianity, and what individual teachers might think necessary to include in their history and philosophy courses. On the whole it can be said that religious education went on in spite of the immense 'progress' in lay education. Whatever the reasons that might have suggested a partial or total exclusion of the Church from the State and communal schools, and whatever the ideals that animated the 'enlightened' revolution in education, it is certain that little effort was made on the lay side to do justice to the part religion plays, in one form or the other, in the spiritual life of men. Even for people who think of spiritual issues in terms of problems, and not of solutions, laws, and dogmas, religion should have meant something more than it meant to those who framed and directed public education in united Italy. The result was that people educated in these schools were not prepared to take a stand on the highest spiritual issues with the minimum necessary amount of knowledge.

Religion was not, however, the only great element absent from the Italian schools. One of the recurrent motifs in the innumerable plans for reforms and in the uninterrupted criticisms of the system of education was this: the school is out of touch with life. Whether by life one meant knowledge of facts nearer to the day-to-day experiences of modern men, or the social intercourse between students and teachers, or among the students themselves, whether one meant a more varied curriculum, including more physical training, so that the body could have its own share in education, or a greater familiarity with the works of nature, the most usual attitude towards the schools was that they were artificial and not 'human' enough. Nothing appealed more to the students when they heard school problems discussed than the hope that school would become more 'human' and alive; and few things were more hated than having to write essays, as very frequently happened, on *la scuola per la vita, non scholae sed vitae discimus*, and similar topics, which looked as though the teachers were forcing the student to write an *apologia* for the schools which they themselves would have refused to do.

In fact, what the organizers of the Italian schools failed to do was to take into account the moral and social side of education. On several occasions they tried to solve the problem, again in intellectual terms, by adding one more subject, i.e., morals, to the many subjects to be studied. In the elementary schools for some time one had to learn a little about *diritti e doveri*; the same was the case in the Technical Schools, because it was inconceivable that children who would never go to school again should

not know the main principles of morals and law. In the Lyceum one year of philosophy, with two periods per week, was devoted to the study of ethics, and in the Normal School the study of pedagogics was completed by that of morals. It is true that, at least for the elementary schools, the *nozioni di diritti e doveri* were abolished, when a Minister laid down that such things were not learnt in books or in words, but through the example of the teachers, and by practice. But nothing more was done, beyond sending a few circular letters or publishing resounding words in the *Official Bulletin of the Ministry*, in order to transform the written or spoken words into practical morals in the schools.

The attitude of most pupils towards the school was that of a hard and unpleasant duty imposed on them by the parents or other 'authorities' and, especially for more mature boys and girls, of an unpleasant work necessary in order eventually to find a job. Nor was the attitude of most parents very different from that of their children, whom they had to console about their sad lot by making promises, and to help in all kinds of ways to get through the long ordeal. The final aim, that of getting a certificate, affected the school life at every moment from beginning to end. Promotion from one form to another meant much more than a proof of proficiency; it meant one year less to go before the end. Being rejected at the end of one year, and forced to spend a second year in the form was a shame for the *bocciato*, and often for his family, and meant a delay in reaching the threshold of 'independent life'. Promotion depending very much on the day-to-day work at school and at home, on the 'interrogations' and the marks received at each of them, home- and school-work was perpetually accompanied by the nightmare of the *voto*, the mark written on the *registro*. The teacher was 'just or unjust', 'strict or generous', because he had in his hands not only the education of the students, but their future. This attitude was due very much to the economic situation of the country, and the need for everybody to find a situation as soon as possible. The better the certificate, the easier it was to find a good situation; therefore the rush to the secondary school increased continuously, independently of the wish to improve one's education. And, once in the school, the aim was to get out of it by any means. This is not to say that corruption was a normal feature of school life; but it certainly was not absent. Both parents and students, and unfortunately a number of teachers, resorted to the worst means in order to reach the goal, the final certificate. Helping the schoolfellow to get a good mark was considered the best way for his friend to assist him; copying of essays and

exercises and the use of translations, at home and at school, was a crime which the teachers had the greatest difficulty in discovering and punishing. Recommendations to teachers, and in some cases threats, in order that they should be generous to this and that pupil, were very frequent; and many parents thought it their duty to find the highest possible recommendation for their children. And this method was often far from unsuccessful. These things brought along with them, of course, corresponding attempts at repression; so that the 'police spirit' was not altogether foreign to the schools.

At school the students had only one thing in common; a duty to listen to the lessons, and study the same things. In the very short intervals between one period and the other, rarely more than five minutes, they could talk to each other either in the class-room or, if they had left the class-room for hygienic reasons, in the corridors. In the two periods each week devoted to physical education a little time might be devoted to games; usually not more than ten or fifteen minutes every period. Not more than once every term, and generally not more than once a year, students of all or several forms went together for a walk lasting a few hours or the whole day. These were the only occasions on which the schools provided something more lively in the way of social life between students. In the school building itself, in the class-rooms, there was nothing that belonged to the pupil except his seat, and nothing of which he had to take special care.

The teachers were considered by the students first of all as examiners, whom one could love but must fear. The respect due to their position was all too often transformed into terror, and one became either too shy or too insincere before such authority. The teacher normally sat on his chair, two or three steps higher than the benches, and very rarely mixed with the students. When the lesson was over the teacher went out of the class-room, the pupils stood in silence, and could not approach him or her unless for very exceptional reasons. Out of school, familiarity between a teacher and a pupil, or even the family of a pupil, was looked on with suspicion; that pupil might be a favourite and unfairly treated with greater indulgence. These drawbacks deriving from the organization of the schools, considered as the first step in the competition for careers, the teachers could remedy, and very many of them actually did, with their personal gifts and their enthusiasm for their calling. The extremely bad financial situation of the teachers kept away from this career many gifted people who might have proved very good at it; on the other hand it was a test of a real spirit of sacrifice for the thousands of young people

who gave up the hope of a better situation from the financial point of view in order to pursue their calling as teachers in elementary and secondary schools. It is to these that is due that sense of respect for the intellectual and moral superiority of teachers which is so frequently found in Italy.

## *Chapter Nine*

### THE PROBLEM OF THE UNIVERSITIES

HIGHER education presented more serious problems than the newly-born State was able to solve. The provisions of the Casati Law were successively applied to the provinces annexed to the Kingdom of Piedmont and later to the Kingdom of Italy; but many local regulations were left in force. The early reform by Matteucci (1862) did not give the universities a new organization, but enforced some rules which were in strong contrast with the liberal principles of Casati, the most important being that the students were forced to follow a certain curriculum and to accept the teachers appointed by the authorities. The freedom granted by the Casati Law, according to which the students could choose most of the subjects they wanted to study, pay the teachers, and choose to attend the courses either of the permanent professors or of the private teachers, was cancelled. Economic independence was not provided for by Casati; but this problem was not so serious when the number of universities was small and the academic authorities in close touch with the Government. A greater difficulty arose through the inability of a bureaucratic Ministry of Education in Florence or Rome to meet the interests of more than twenty universities with different traditions, spread all over the peninsula and the islands. The many regulations issued had one aim in common—to make the dependence of the university on the State more strict and complete. The alterations brought by the Laws of 1886 and 1909 again emphasized the omnipotence of the State in regard to the universities. The principle of uniformity and centralization was applied more thoroughly, especially in the latter law, which provided a unified career for all professors, making the role of the private teachers insignificant.

That the universities would have to find a new organization was realized from the beginning by nearly everybody. From Terenzio Mamiani in 1860 down to Luigi Luzzatti in 1909 all the best brains interested in higher education tried to push the political authorities to a reform which would guarantee much more freedom to the pursuit of truth and thus raise the standard of the universities. Discussions in Parliament were not less lively than in scientific and educational circles; and most ministers had their new plans for the universities; in the fifty

years following Casati about fifteen different plans were presented to Parliament, and failed to achieve any result, mostly on account of the instability of cabinets. The most stubborn champion of reform was the scientist Guido Baccelli, who in his various terms as Minister of Education between 1881 and 1898 presented not less than six times to the Chamber of Deputies a bill for the reorganization of the universities. The jurist Guido Fusinato supported it with a report which remained famous and formed the basis of the juridical side of all future plans of reform.

In 1910 it was decided to set up a committee of fifteen members chosen from among university professors to find the best way of raising the standard of higher education. After four years of study and discussion the committee, which included such men of science as Baccelli, Leonardo Bianchi, Edoardo Maragliano, and Alberto Tonelli, such jurists as Fusinato and Vittorio Polacco, such educationists as Luigi Credaro, such historians as Pigorini and Alfredo Galletti, and such classicists as Luigi Ceci, produced a report in which all the proposals submitted to the Minister were prefaced by a long study of the problems of higher education and the solutions adopted in other countries. It is perhaps the most instructive text for the history of universities in Italy since the unification, and is of fundamental importance for the study of higher education after 1922, as it is on very much the lines given in this report that the universities were transformed in 1923 and worked till 1936. The war of 1915-18 did not change the situation very much; or at least the diagnosis of the evils on which Gentile based his reform was that given in this report.

Universities had become, in the eyes of the committee, a kind of *fabbrica di dottori*, a shop where degrees were given at a rather low price, and after a training which had hardly anything to do either with true science or with the requirements of the different professions. The main problem for every student was how to get his degree, and, before that, how to pass the score of examinations in special subjects required by the regulations for the several Faculties. The various subjects were no longer regarded as parts of the one realm of truth but fragments independent of each other; and the student was never asked to understand anything about the value of the whole of science, but to be able to answer on those details which the teachers had expounded in their year's course of lectures. The books by which most students prepared for the examinations were the *dispense*, usually nothing more than notes taken at the lectures themselves by one of the students. After the student had passed these examinations, one by one, and written a thesis, he was automatically qualified for the several

professions to which his faculty opened the door. Since the students were forced to pass a stipulated number of examinations in all the subjects fixed by the regulations, all interest that they might have in choosing the subjects which they would have liked to study more thoroughly was stifled from the beginning. Nor were the subjects chosen to meet the real needs of a higher education. The question whether universities are to be training schools for the professions, or institutions for the promotion of science, was not, according to the committee, a real question, but was prompted only by the ambiguity of the curricula. The 'fragmentation' of science was not only fatal for the preparation of lawyers, engineers, doctors, and teachers, but for true science. The teachers did not feel themselves members of one body, having a collective responsibility towards students and science; nor was there any inducement for them to improve their standard of teaching. The students had to attend the lessons of one teacher for one subject; the principle that he could attend the lectures of a *libero docente* who taught better than the permanent professors, and whom he, the student would pay, had completely disappeared. When the professor had 'conquered his chair' (this was and is the usual phrase in Italian universities) he could sit back and be sure that nothing could reduce his income, just as nothing could increase it if he tried to improve as a scientist and a teacher. Apart from the most indispensable laboratories for some subjects in the scientific Faculties, there was no place for the student to meet his teachers, nor any assistant who kept in touch with both teachers and students.

In spite of a theoretical right of choice of the new teachers on the part of the academic bodies (the report goes on) they are appointed by the State. The universities have hardly any financial independence. It is the State that pays the teachers, collects fees, determines how much money has to be spent for this or that university, and in each of them for this or that Faculty, down to the minutest details. Even if the whole academic body should decide that, in the interests of science and education, their university needs a new building, a new library, or a diversion of funds from one purpose to another, they can do no more than try to persuade the central authorities that they are right, and that it is in the interest of the State to effect such or such improvement. In this way the very field which is most inaccessible to the bureaucratic mind of the Italian Civil Servant, is at the mercy of the officials of the Ministry of Education. The State, without any real competence, controls higher education, making it nearly impossible for those who are competent to use it for the progress of civilization.

On the other hand (the report proceeds) the State has practically no control over the professional capacity of the graduates. Whether the curricula are or are not a suitable training for the professions, whether the examiners are good or bad judges of their students, whether, as frequently happens, especially in smaller universities, the degrees are given almost as a present in order to attract more students, or, as happens with very severe teachers, the standard required for one subject makes it impossible for students to study the others sufficiently, the credit accorded by the State to the degrees given by the universities 'in the name of the King' is always the same. The bad and the good doctor, the bad and the good graduate engineer will be equally guaranteed by the State as efficient for their jobs.

The remedies proposed by the Ministerial Committee are very radical in many respects. They consist mainly in a transfer of authority over all that is directly connected with teaching from the State to the universities, and in a strengthening of the power of the State to see that the persons admitted to the professions are worthy of their qualifications. Side by side with these two 'pillars of the new system', other principles are put forward to justify the claim to autonomy to show how independence from the State will bring about a higher standard for science and education. Among these principles are those of the 'unity of science', competition between official and private teachers, freedom from perpetual examination, an increase in the number of assistant teachers, laboratories, and seminaries, the institution of training colleges and courses for teachers; and perhaps most important of all is the principle that universities ought not to teach how things are, but how one discovers them; 'skepsis' instead of 'dogma'.

'The unity of the medieval university', the report states, 'was based on the unity of the Church. The unity of the modern university must be based on the unity of scientific thought.' The students must never lose sight of this unity, which alone gives meaning to higher culture; there must be, instead of, or side by side with, the many fragmentary disciplines, some of the most fundamental on which the others depend. The *grandi cattedre*, a kind of trivium and quadrivium of modern science ought to be the backbone of higher education. Teachers ought to deliver two kinds of lectures, one on a detailed subject through which students may learn how to conduct research, another on broader lines to keep the mind open to the whole of the main subject. The student will be offered a real school where he can learn what is best and find out what he likes best. He must be free to choose his own subjects and, within certain limits, his own



teachers. The 'ordinary professor', must not have any privileges, the student who prefers to be taught by a private teacher must have no obstacle put in his way. The fees paid by the students must go to the teachers they choose; there must be no examinations in which the 'ordinary professor' examines instead of the private teacher. Thus there will be a healthy competition between the classes of teachers. The student will find in the new university much more scope for specialized work. The time he spends at school will not be confined to listening to lectures delivered from the chair; he will meet his teachers, and work with them in these new institutions. It is there that the teachers, private or public, will judge, day by day, of the proficiency of their pupils.

The unique character of science makes it impossible to distinguish between scientific and professional training. In one instance, however, the university should take special care in training students for their future work. The teachers of secondary schools need something more than lectures and seminars if they are to start their work efficiently after leaving the university. The Higher Normal School at Pisa is a good example of what should be done in other places in this direction; and it might be useful to institute, side by side with the Faculties of Philosophy and *Belles-Lettres*, and of Science, some *Corsi di Magistero* where would-be teachers could learn how to teach. But, apart from this exception, the universities have nothing directly to do with the future work of students; they must see that these young people receive the best 'liberal' education in the several fields they choose. The universities give the education; the State qualifies for professions. This is done by way of the State examinations, in which the universities as such have no voice; they will, of course, provide some of the examiners; but the State can choose competent people for this purpose wherever they can be found.

The universities must have the greatest possible independence in financial matters in order to be able to keep their freedom of teaching and research. State contributions are, of course, necessary, but this does not justify a complete control over expenses. All institutions, local governments, and other public or private bodies interested in the existence of the universities ought to contribute to their needs without wanting to interfere with them too much. All proceeds of student fees must go directly, and not through the State, to the universities; gifts and bequests ought to become their absolute property.

On the other hand, the universities are to keep their character of State institutions. The State is recognized as the 'person'

first concerned with the promotion of higher education; it must waive the right to control the development of science, but ought to have more than the functions of a policeman watching over a private business. The choice of the head of the university must remain with the State; the appointments of professors must be approved by the State; the professors are to be considered as State officials and, as such, take an oath of allegiance to the Crown and the laws of the State. On this basis, it is claimed, the university will live in the frame of what the committee call the *Rechtsstaat*, not under the yoke of a *Polizeistaat*. The State, in a way, represents the nation; and the attitude of the committee, in regard to the university and science, is strongly nationalistic: 'The universities must become schools of national energy'; 'The schools of all grades must have one soul, the very soul of the nation'. This nationalism centred in the idea of the State was, however, qualified by the limitation which made university autonomy possible: 'We want our State to be strong but, just because of that, it must not monopolize what cannot be in its power.'

This attitude towards higher education and its relations with the State was that of the German builders of the nineteenth-century universities. The report seems to have the German system as a model, both in the main lines and in most details. Academic freedom, competition between public and private teachers, seminars, State examination as completely distinct from university degrees, the idea of universities as training centres for scientific research, and the principle of the national function of higher education are avowedly suggested to the ministerial committee by the German examples, which seemed to have found the right formula for collaboration between the State and higher education.

## *Chapter Ten*

### TOWARDS A REFORM

THE reports of the special commission set up to inquire into the state of elementary and secondary schools and the universities and to draft proposals for their improvement show that the need of vast changes in the educational system was recognized by the central authorities. The fate of so many proposals between 1859 and 1914, however, is proof that the State was far from capable of meeting the need with speed and efficiency. Seen in the light of the reform of 1923, many changes brought to the elementary and secondary schools, especially in the ten years preceding the first World War, appear to be stepping-stones leading to that more fundamental transformation. The most significant attempts are those of the three years between the end of the war and the conquest of power by the Fascists. They show how ripe the times were for the reform, and how independent this reform was from what was later to be considered as essentially Fascist. On the other hand reform was urged more and more by the teachers' organizations, which were beginning to play a real part in political life. Some of the men who took a leading part in the legislation of 1923 had for many years been in the foreground of these organizations, and had advocated those very reforms from their democratic platforms.

Between 1919 and 1922 five Ministers of Education followed each other: A. Baccelli, A. Torre, B. Croce, M. O. Corbino, and A. Anile. A. Baccelli started on the work of reforming the schools by altering the syllabuses and by giving direction to teachers. The contents of the syllabuses he introduced in the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceums (Classic and Modern) were not very different from the previous ones; but the spirit in which teaching was given had to be changed fundamentally. 'No subject must be taught as if it were a quantum of science to be learnt by heart; it would become a dead weight in the memory of students, engendering nothing but boredom and a desire to get rid of it as soon as possible. Each subject has a meaning only inasmuch as it stimulates the special gifts of each student; it must leave in his mind such wide and comprehensive conceptions and power of discrimination as constitute true culture. . . . Teaching must be ruled not by the catchwords of an encyclopaedia, but by the laws of mental development. . . . It does not matter whether the

pupils know or do not know a great amount of detail; they must participate with their very soul in the truth they are being taught. . . . Only thus will the schools become their own life. . . . They will study not in order to pass an examination but to acquire a perpetual treasure for their intellect. . . . Latin and Greek grammar must be the means to a deep understanding of the authors one has to read in those languages. . . . The teacher of the Italian language has the duty, not to train his pupils in the secrets and charms of style, but to interpret for them the soul of the nation. . . . Philosophy and economics must be studied as intellectual values present in the moral and social life of which the students are to become spectators and actors.'

In the attempt to bring life into the schools Baccelli asked the heads of schools to have in each school one teacher appointed by his colleagues to take care of moral and civic education. This 'moral director' ought to arrange lectures on the most important facts of contemporary life in Italy, help the pupils in any activities aiming at a more intimate collaboration between home and school, and keep in touch with the pupils in order to follow their moral development. This idea did not have much success, although the Ministers who followed, especially Anile, tried to make it more practicable.

Benedetto Croce had never been directly interested in the problems of schools. His whole attitude towards culture, however, would have brought him to reforms of great importance if he had had the time to settle in as a Minister and carry through the plans which he started to prepare in his thirteen months of office. The ideas guiding his work were largely those which triumphed in Gentile's reform. The most important document of his activity as a Minister is the bill he introduced in the Chamber of Deputies on the examinations in secondary schools. The leading principles are that examinations should test the maturity of students; that teachers ought to be quite free to bring their pupils to maturity. There ought not to be syllabuses for each form, but syllabuses for examinations; the examinations to be held at the end of the courses should be independent of the teachers who prepared the students, so that equality may be ensured for students of private schools; the examinations would therefore be State examinations, and would guarantee greater seriousness in both private and public schools, and much more freedom in methods of study. This bill was never discussed in the Chamber because of a ministerial crisis, and was not taken up again by Croce's successor. Anile, in fact, did very little to meet the call for reform. His promise to introduce a bill for the Normal Schools was not fulfilled. The one step towards the

future organization was his decree for the decentralization of administrative power in the universities. Although this did not bring about any real autonomy for the various universities, it made it easier to start autonomous administration.

While the Ministers were thus endeavouring to change the structure and spirit of schools piecemeal, the associations interested in education, and above all those of elementary and secondary school teachers, were debating the problems, urging the State to take action, and working side by side with the political parties to achieve a wholesale revival of education. The origin of these associations is to be found largely in the economic problem of teachers; but this problem was so closely connected with those of efficiency that the importance of these organizations was very great for all questions connected with education. The *Unione Magistrale Nazionale* was formed by thousands of elementary school teachers. It was founded in 1900 by Luigi Credaro, later Minister for Education (in 1906 and 1910-14), the most important representative of the Herbartian and Positivist school. The *Unione* was indirectly supported by the Socialist movement. Their periodical *I Diritti della Scuola* did much to give the teachers a sense of social responsibility and to interest them in political problems connected with education. On the other hand the idealistic movement exercised a strong influence, especially through the agency of Gentile, Lombardo-Radice, and Codignola, whose main field of activity was, however, in the association of teachers of the secondary schools, the *Federazione Nazionale degli Insegnanti Medii*.

At the beginning of 1901 the Minister Gallo issued an order according to which all teachers in State schools were forbidden to coach children of any school privately or to give any kind of lessons outside their classes. This meant a great blow to most teachers whose wages were insufficient and who used to eke them out with as many private lessons as possible. This prohibition acted as a stimulant; and in several places associations of teachers were founded to defend the violated rights. Of the two main groups of local associations which took the lead in this movement, that organized in 1902 by the German-born classicist Giuseppe Kirner was the only one which survived. He gave the *Federazione*, which grouped most of the local associations, a *raison d'être* other than the financial. The first important result was achieved in 1904 when the teachers of secondary schools obtained from the State wide guarantees against the possibility of ministerial *clientelae*. In the Congress of Cremona of 1903 it was decided that the *Federazione* should find support in those political parties which showed interest in education and in the

status of teachers. It was in this atmosphere that educational problems were discussed, and prominent persons directly interested in the life of schools found political support among masses of people whose material and spiritual life was tied to the fate of education.

It was at a congress of the *Federazione* that the problem of religious and lay education was violently discussed, with Gentile defending religious instruction according to a plan which he eventually carried out in 1923. It was through the activities of the *Federazione* that such persons as Gaetano Salvemini and Alfredo Galletti spread their ideas on schools absolutely free from religion, and advocated special powers for the Government to bring about a reform of education. The periodicals directly or indirectly connected with this movement, such as *L'Istruzione Media*, *La Corrente*, and *I Nuovi Doveri*, were training thousands of secondary-school teachers to defend their interests and those of culture, to discuss all kinds of educational problems, and to prepare for the new school in which individual initiative should not be hampered by a State bureaucracy, but recognized as a necessary constituent of a strong and stable State.

Among the persons who had the greatest influence on the teachers, and later also on the authorities, was Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice. A secondary-school teacher himself from 1901 to 1911 and later on Professor of Pedagogics in the universities of Catania and Rome, he was active as a writer and editor of periodicals which had the greatest success. He edited *I Nuovi Doveri*, which was followed by the *Rassegna di Pedagogia* (1912) and *L'Educazione Nazionale*. Series of books which did much to spread a higher culture of educational problems were published under his editorship, such as *Pedagogisti ed Educatori* and *Scuola e Vita*. He belonged to the circles of Croce and Gentile and collaborated in their periodicals and other activities, remaining more faithful than either to the principle that the interests of the spirit are far above personal differences. His book *Lezioni di Didattica* was considered for at least twenty-five years after its first appearance (1913) as indispensable for all elementary-school teachers who wanted to prepare seriously for their work. His love for children and his passionate interest in the development of their souls, especially through free artistic expression and the discovery of the marvels of nature, made him the warmest advocate of a reform of schools, particularly those of the first grade, and of training schools for teachers. Although addicted to Gentile's philosophical 'sect' for most metaphysical problems, in which he had no great interest, he brought into that trend of ideas which was to reform the schools in 1923

much of Rousseau's faith in nature without the sophistication of a revolutionary radicalism. He was perhaps the best representative of that neo-pagan optimistic religion impregnated with a non-sacramental Christian love.

With the State machinery already in movement, with an almost universal interest in educational questions, with organizations of teachers linked with political parties, and with prominent persons of thought and action devoted to the task of giving a new direction to education, the times were ripe, whatever might happen, to reform the school system of Italy. The war of 1915-18 stopped the process in one way, but accelerated it by making keener the desire for new things. The result of it was, in the educational field, the *Riforma Gentile* of 1923.

## II. GENTILE'S 'FASCIST' REFORM

### Chapter One

#### EARLY FASCISM AND EDUCATION

THE first great reform brought about by the Government headed by Mussolini was that of the schools. It was the *Riforma Gentile*, which was soon styled as *Riforma fascistissima*, or, in Mussolini's own words, *la più fascista delle riforme*. There is no question that the method by which legislation was introduced was one which Fascists liked, that of the 'full powers' (*pieni poteri*). The reform was in fact a first and quite successful act of dictatorship. It is more difficult to see any Fascist character in the actual content of the reform and it is easy to agree with a later Minister of Education, Bottai, that Gentile's reform was the most Fascist at the time because there were no other reforms to compete with it.

Most Fascist writers, and above all, Mussolini himself, declared repeatedly that Fascism was a movement, not a doctrine; a practical training, not a school. One of the later theorists, A. Canepa, tried to identify some characteristics in early Fascism in order to show that it contained *in nuce* what it became explicitly in the course of time. On education he says that from the very beginning Fascism aimed at 'educating' the Italian people in two ways, i.e., by propaganda and self-discipline. But even these two ways were not defined by rules or clear aims. What Mussolini used to say at the time of his intervention in 1915, i.e., that one must prepare the mental atmosphere for war, was true of Fascist propaganda from 1919 to 1922; propaganda prepared the mental atmosphere for the conquest of power by the Duce and his closest collaborators. Self-discipline is a very vague term to describe the half-military and half-anarchical character of the *squadre d'azione*, but still comes nearer to an idea which Fascism tried to popularize in many words and some deeds.

The programme with which the *Fasci di Combattimento* started their life in 1919 contained not one word about education. Mussolini himself never spoke of this question in hundreds of speeches and articles till 1922. Whenever he talked of giving a new consciousness to the Italian people, he thought of political action directed to the masses of adults. His own education was that of the streets and piazzas, of newspapers and platforms. Methodical and patient work, governed by principles having well-defined aims, was not in his nature. The late apotheosis of



his mother, the humble schoolmistress of Predappio, had not been preceded by any attempt at understanding what school teaching meant in Italy. When others had done the work of reorganizing the schools, Mussolini remembered that he also had been a teacher and declared that he had long known the problems of the schools and had been looking forward to their solution. But there is no evidence to support his belated statement.

Among the leaders who followed Mussolini down to the March on Rome, none came from the circles interested in education. The two *gerarchi della prima ora* who later on became Ministers of Education had never done anything in that line before. The *quadrumviro* De Vecchi and Bottai turned to deal with education when it was clear that Fascism and the schools had very little in common, and it appeared necessary to put new men, absolutely devoted to the Duce, in charge of education. The newspapers and periodicals founded between 1919 and 1922 by Fascists were all concerned with political and social questions; none of them was principally concerned with schools and education. While the Socialist and Popular (Catholic) parties were keen to keep in touch with the teachers and their organizations, and discussed problems of education in their congresses, the *Fasci di Combattimento* and, later on, the National Fascist Party did not seem to realize the importance of schools for any future action.

The adventurous character of Fascism in its beginnings appealed to the young people. Among undergraduates and students in secondary schools political questions were debated with greater interest and heat than before, since the *squadre d'azione* were active and the novelty of songs and uniforms and processions aroused curiosity and gave the very young ones a feeling that they had a say in life. Of course, other movements besides Fascism aroused this keen interest in political strife, but it is true to say that it affected their school life more than other ideologies. People who were between thirteen and twenty in 1920-22 remember how often schoolboys organized themselves in political groups, armed themselves not only for fun, had their small processions in the neighbourhood of their schools, and discussed violently between themselves and sometimes with younger teachers the pros and cons of the several parties. The attention of the students was diverted from their school duties, and there followed a kind of conflict between school and political organizations, which continued for the whole lifetime of Fascism. The Party itself was making a beginning in the task of influencing the younger people through special organizations. The links between it and the university Fascist groups became stronger in

1922; groups of 'Balilla' and *Avanguardisti* for children between ten and eighteen were being organized. Rough plans for military and political education were set up, which developed into the 'Fascist totalitarian education' of later years. The principles of this education were as yet as vague as possible; the atmosphere which was being created was that of an extreme patriotism, of the 'rights of youth', of voluntary militarism.

Side by side with the political strife of parties, another struggle had started inside the Federation of Secondary School Teachers. At the end of 1919 the first congress of this association after the war was held in Pisa. At that time another person had become prominent in the movement, Ernesto Codignola, who became as it were the political leader of one faction, which eventually prevailed over the others. The accusation was pronounced by Codignola against the majority of the secondary-school teachers that they had been responsible for the Italian failures in the war: *La Scuola Media ha preparato Caporetto*. The attitude of the majority of the congress was such that Codignola launched an appeal to teachers to join a new organization, the *Fascio di Educazione Nazionale*. Its origin is absolutely independent of the *Fasci di Combattimento*. Codignola himself and those who joined the new organizations were not members of Mussolini's *Fasci*; and some of his friends, like Lombardo-Radice, Piero Gobetti, and M. Valgimigli, always remained opponents of Fascism. But the two movements had some ideal link, which at a certain moment could justify collaboration, even though not a complete understanding. The strong feeling against Socialism, a warm patriotism, a continuation of the fighting spirit of interventionism, and above all the determination to transform the life of the nation were explicit characteristics of the two *Fasci*. The *Fascio di Educazione Nazionale* gathered in itself the most active followers of the philosophical and pedagogical idealism, and other outstanding personalities of culture. Close to Lombardo-Radice and Gentile there were, for instance, Bernardino Varisco, Antonino Anile, and Prezzolini. Their call for action, especially as regards reform of secondary schools, was as strong as that for the conquest of power on the part of the political *Fasci*. The *Fascio di Educazione* had something that the other *Fasci* lacked, i.e., well-defined programmes and clear brains. The periodical *La Nostra Scuola* became the official organ of these educationists, and published plans for the reforms which needed to be made immediately. Among them was the State examination, the decentralization of administration, and a reduction in the numbers of pupils and teachers.

The ideas of the *Fascio di Educazione Nazionale* were pre-

sented in a motion at the Rome Congress of the Nationalist Party in 1920. It was with this Party, more than with the *Fasci di Combattimento*, that collaboration with a view to putting into action their plans of reform seemed possible. On the other hand there was the Catholic Popular Party, which supported very strongly, and for obvious reasons, the freedom of teaching connected with the State examinations: the religious schools would have a better chance of developing. The representatives of the *Fascio di Educazione*, and above all Codignola, would have welcomed any collaboration which might guarantee the triumph of the reform. When the March on Rome brought the Fascists to power, it was natural for the *Fascio di Educazione* to throw in their lot with the new Government, in spite of the objections of many members, provided that Mussolini accepted the idea of an 'idealistic' reform. To the Fascists nothing could be more welcome than people determined somehow to renew the life of the nation; especially if their ideas were not totally opposed to those on which Fascist propaganda had worked so successfully. Fascism, which had no definite programme and no doctrine, found, for some time at least, a programme and a doctrine which could be immediately translated into deeds. Mussolini's choice of Gentile, a non-party man with liberal connexions, was not only the choice of a Minister. When the Duce had to write, ten years later, his *Dottrina del Fascismo*, it was Gentile who lent him, perhaps more than the ideas, the words themselves. Gentile on the other hand, and some of his followers, such as Codignola, who entered the Party, thought that they were giving Fascism an intelligent soul, which would lead the emotions along a good path. This marriage between philosophy and power was not very successful in the long run. Not quite fifteen years later Fascism no longer recognized the *Fascio di Educazione* as the brother of the *Fasci di Combattimento*. The doctrines which prevailed in 1923 were styled conservative and reactionary and it was said that the true revolution in the schools had yet to begin.

## Chapter Two

### GENTILE'S EDUCATIONAL THEORY

ALready mentioned, the reforms in the educational system brought about under the aegis of Fascism in 1923 became known as the *Riforma Gentile*. Giovanni Gentile was not the only educationist responsible for that work; nor were his collaborators in complete agreement with him, or between themselves, on all points. It is, however, true that he, more than the others, commanded respect in most quarters; and his long activity as a writer and master in philosophical and educational questions qualified him for leadership in reshaping the Italian schools. His personality became, therefore, dominant not only because he was appointed to be Minister for Education in Mussolini's Cabinet, but because it was under his impulse, and closely following his ideas, that the *Riforma* took place.

Gentile's philosophical and educational theories are not wholly original. In fact, they are original only to a small extent. His debt to thinkers as different in outlook and removed in time as Pestalozzi and Croce is much more fundamental than he and his followers liked to confess. Even in the field of school reforms the road he eventually followed had already been tried by Alfredo Baccelli and Croce; if these, and especially Croce, had been given as free a hand as Gentile in the short spell of their administration, the schools would have been transformed very much in the same way as they were in 1923-24. It is, however, right to recall in some detail Gentile's utterances on education, because he is the only person who worked out his theories with an eye both to a complete metaphysical doctrine and to the needs and possibilities of the Italian schools in the first quarter of this century.

Gentile's philosophical doctrine is one of the offshoots of the Hegelian tree planted in Italy by such thinkers as Bertrando Spaventa and Francesco De Sanctis. His interest in the history of philosophy was very marked from early days; in time his liking for theoretical arguments about the main problems of philosophy became more prominent, and was second only to his apostolic and self-centred ambition to be a new *maestro di color che sanno*. He shares with Croce the merit of having spread an interest in philosophical problems among people who would otherwise have spurned them as devoid of all content; thinkers ancient and

modern, Italian and foreign, became popular among cultivated people who, but for the efforts and enthusiasm of Croce, Gentile, and their followers, would have ignored all but their names. He had a wide influence; his ideas on education and some of his philosophical views were accepted by a number of younger teachers and writers. His style, however, and his philosophical jargon are often nebulous and rhetorical, and have been used and imitated by many empty brains and presumptuous writers who have helped to bring confusion into the minds of the young. His university and public lectures were enlivening; his writings are more inspiring when they take a poetical and almost mystical turn than when they try to give a logical justification to the principal dogmas of the author's 'absolute idealism' or 'actualism'.

Among the many books written by Gentile, the most useful for understanding his work as a school reformer are the *Sommario di Pedagogia come Scienza Filosofica* and *La Riforma dell'Educazione—Discorsi ai Maestri di Trieste*. The *Teoria Generale dello Spirito come Atto Puro* and the *Sistema di Logica come Teoria del Conoscere* give the necessary background for a clearer understanding of the philosophical principles on which his theory of education is built; the *Discorsi di Religione* and the essays on the *Profeti del Risorgimento* show a kind of philosophical and patriotic mysticism which he would have liked to impose on Fascism; while his *Teoria del Diritto* gives a theoretical basis for that compromise between a vague liberalism asserted on behalf of the 'human Spirit' and a dictatorial absolutism, on which Gentile has based all his career as the philosopher of Fascism.

The first assumption in Gentile's system is that nothing exists except as an act of thought. All assertions of the type 'A is' or 'A is B' are valid only so long as they mean 'I think that A is, I think that A is B'; and, in the latter form, the existence-value resides in the words 'I think', because the thing is only in my act of thinking it. According to Gentile, Berkeley was right in stating that it is absurd to conceive something of a nature different from that of ideas; he was wrong, however, when he assumed that something of this nature can be conceived by a mind as existing independently of the mind which conceives it, although not independently of any mind whatever. 'If I think A,' says Gentile, 'A is my thought; if you think A, A is your thought; therefore, if A is one thing, your thought and my thought are the same thing; and as I am nothing but my thought in the act of thinking, and you are nothing but your thought in the act of thinking, the consequence is that you and I, when we are thinking A, are one and the same being.'

The reality of the individual as such is, in this way, submerged

in the one omnipresent and eternally acting 'Spirit'. Individuals, societies, nations, and races have a meaning only so far as they are expressions of this one-and-all being. 'Spirit' lives in a state of perpetual creative activity; its life is history; in its fullest expression it is thought. Thinking about things, present, past, or future, is bringing them into being; therefore not only science and metaphysics but also metaphysics and history in the making share in the same nature: 'Spirit' which is expressing itself, creating itself in, for example, Gentile's logical or political utterances, is making history as much as when it brings about the Persian Empire or lets Newton's apple fall from the tree. All *a priori* rules, and all scientific laws which are supposed to remain unchangeable are in fact subordinated to the ever-changing 'Spirit', which carries into the light the Ptolemaic system as well as the Copernican heliocentrism, the arithmetical mysticism of the Pythagoreans as well as Einstein's relativity.

Human activities which seem to be different from thought itself are but disguised or incomplete forms of thought. Apart from thought in its fullest, explicit form, i.e., philosophy in the making, Gentile recognizes religion and art as conditionally independent activities. Religion can be described as the state of mind of one who has not yet found that there is nothing outside the 'Spirit' in which he has his own existence, and who contrasts himself with this outside being, or force, or intelligence, i.e., God, and feels himself subject to this limitation. Art, on the other hand, is as it were the working power of one who merely expresses himself, without realizing in an explicit way that his life as an individual is nothing more than the life, in him, of 'Spirit'; he lends words to a universal feeling, positing it as individual experience, without linking it with the rational fact that it cannot be individual without being universal; if he did so, he would write a philosophical essay, not a poem.

The 'Spirit' is totally free in its actions and thoughts as nothing exists outside it which might hamper it or condition it. Spontaneous activity is one and the same thing as life and history. Any attempt to assert a limitation in this perpetual self-determination would fail, because it implies a contradiction; any rule or law that might be supposed to direct the life of 'Spirit' would be nothing but empty words. On the other hand, this absolute freedom is a quality (Gentile might say the substance itself) of 'Spirit', considered in its whole. The individual man, as he is thought of by the uninitiated, is free only so far as he recognizes his unavoidable connexion with the whole of reality, and accepts (realizes) the will of this all-being. If he wants to be free, the individual man must raise himself to the level of 'Spirit'; other-

wise he is a slave, even when he believes himself to be acting according to his own decision; his acts are not his own, unless he consciously expresses the universal will. When the universal will manifests itself through one man, the others who obey and follow him are as free as he is, unless in order to serve a false conception of freedom they oppose his decrees.

The application of these theories in the educational field formed the basis of Gentile's work as a school reformer. First of all, the methods of education must turn, according to Gentile, in a new direction. The teacher is not somebody who provides a given amount of information for his pupils; nor are there some fixed rules according to which this intellectual nourishment passes into the mind of the learner. The notions considered in themselves are nothing; the student might absorb an indefinite number of details through reading or hearing without being wiser than he was; he might become 'instructed' without becoming 'educated'. The truth of a word, a formula, a historic tale, a scientific law, a philosophical argument, or anything else resides in the conscious act of him who utters, hears, or thinks it. The work of the teacher consists in bringing his pupils into his own sphere of thought and making them share in his enlightened life. Teacher and pupil are not two different persons; they can be different only so far as the relationship between them is not established by the actual fact of teaching-and-learning; at this moment all duality disappears, and the teacher discovers the truth in the pupil as much as the pupil progresses by following in the footsteps of the teacher. As the nature of 'Spirit' is movement, history, change, and perpetual creation, every teacher and every pupil are something new in comparison with all others that are, were, or will be; pedagogic rules subjecting the teachers to a pre-established course are violations of the freedom of 'Spirit', and therefore can only hamper the progress of truth. Pedagogics as a science has no meaning unless it becomes philosophy; knowledge of what 'Spirit' is entails knowledge of what education is; there is no distinction between 'Spirit' becoming conscious of truth and 'Spirit' extending its truth through education. That is the reason why Gentile abolished the teaching of pedagogics in the schools for the training of teachers.

In one sense, Gentile's theory can be described as an exalted intellectualism. His insistence on the importance of thinking, his reduction of all volition to thought, and his exaltation of philosophy as the highest form of life bear witness to this intellectualistic attitude. Teaching of philosophy was to become prominent in all curricula if educated people were to come

within sight of truth. Philosophy, however, must not be a fixed doctrine, but 'thought in the making'; men must be led to 'philosophize', i.e., to discuss, contemplate, and live in familiarity with the highest representatives of the philosophical spirit of mankind. Formal logic, moral codes, and scientific psychology (the three parts of philosophy that were traditionally taught in Lyceums) are little more than dead things. The students must, on the contrary, exercise their minds reading, and meditating upon, the works of Plato and Kant, Aquinas and Galileo, Aristotle, Spinoza, Bergson, Gentile, and many other philosophers; they must find out the solutions to metaphysical problems, or realize through their own efforts how and why many of these questions are insoluble. The history of philosophy, if well understood and interpreted, will not bring about a hopeless scepticism engendered by the different answers given to the same problems, but will persuade the student how fruitful and varied 'Spirit' is, and will show a continuous progress towards the realization of the 'idealistic' Truth.

History can be distinguished from philosophy just as one picture looked at from different angles can be considered as two. History is the full life of 'Spirit', considered in its expression in individuals, nations, and societies of all kinds. While philosophy considers the highest essence in the life of 'Spirit', history aims at a broader outlook on all things; art and politics, religion and philosophy itself, feelings of individuals and State or national ambitions are studied in order that the knowledge of 'Spirit' may be as wide and comprehensive as possible. The history of one's own nation may happen to be in the foreground, of course, just as happenings in one's own home are often more important to a man than those outside it; but no real understanding of local history is possible, unless it is seen in the frame of the life of all peoples in all ages. History and philosophy should form, therefore, the main basis for all education.

The past has a meaning only in so far as it is brought into the present as a vital element; the best way of approaching bygone experiences is to 'live through' the documents in which they have been handed down to posterity. Second-hand information, as provided in manuals, must be avoided as much as possible. As for philosophy, the reading of original texts is essential. As for the history of literature, the number of authors to be read in the schools must be greatly increased if a real knowledge of the literary past is expected from the students. One thing that must be avoided in the study of poems and prose works is the lifeless analysis of stylistic rules, verse forms, and linguistic peculiarities; the reader must revive in himself the mind and feelings of the



writer; he must discover with critical acumen the main strains and motives in the work or passage he has before his eyes.

The mind is better trained to think and understand the facts of 'Spirit' through the study of language than through the study of natural science or mathematics. These latter present the world in schemes; the former in a living system. Latin is specially suitable for this training in Italian schools; it opens the way to a knowledge and understanding of human civilization more than any other language. Every person who wants to have more than an elementary education must have passed through some of this training. The study of Latin, however, must not be confined to grammar and vocabulary; the works of poets, historians, and orators must be read as much as possible, in order that the full life that found its expression in that language may be understood and absorbed by the student.

Religion is considered by Gentile as one of the essential 'moments' of 'Spirit'. It is therefore necessary that education should be based, in some degree, on religious teaching. The importance of religion consists in this, that it anticipates some universal views which will be fully understood only through philosophy. Children under ten are not likely to rise to the highest form of understanding, but are inclined to feel the presence of greatness in a religious way, i.e., in 'objects' overpowering their own being. This naïve approach to 'Spirit', considered as a God outside and above men, is peculiar to the first stage of the human mind. Religion, therefore, is to take a fundamental share in the teaching of elementary-school children; when they grow up they will find out the real and complete meaning of dogmas, stories, and rites; philosophy will explain them as a partial view which did not take into account the 'subjective' side of 'Spirit'.

Art, on the other hand, being the immediate expression of personal feelings, and the pre-logical interpretation of the world, is the main channel for exercising freedom: 'let the children sing, paint, and write without disturbing their spontaneity'. Individual and choral singing, *disegno libero* (free design), and the writing of a diary in which every child puts down his own experiences, are much more important than learning exactly all the grammatical rules, or drawing perfect geometrical figures with the ruler and compass. In a further stage of education, art must be considered in its historical perspective; wherever possible, courses in the history of art must be set up, in order that students may acquire taste and discrimination.

The natural sciences and mathematics serve only a secondary purpose in education. They are, of course, findings of the human

'Spirit', and as such must not be left completely aside. They are, however, infected too often by the claim of being *the* truth itself, or the highest attainable truth. The very fact that they assume a fixed world of things, laws, forms, and numbers, existing by itself and to be conquered by the mind, diminishes their importance. If viewed in the right perspective, Gentile thinks, they appear as stepping-stones towards the philosophical comprehension of reality; that is why they must be accepted in a proper education, and put in a lower position than philosophy and history. Moreover, they must be viewed as much as possible in the frame of a philosophical outlook; in schools where sciences happen to be prominent, the teaching of philosophy must emphasize the importance and value of the problems of scientific knowledge. In the first stages of education there is room for science only so far as the curiosity and intuition of the young can reach, while hypotheses, formulae, classifications, and laws must be left until a time when their limitations can be understood.

Freedom being the very nature of 'Spirit', as few restrictions as possible should limit the right to teach, and anyone must be allowed to open schools of all grades. It is in the interest of the State itself that as many schools as possible should be opened on the initiative of private individuals and bodies. Since a kind of uniformity is inevitable in publicly administered institutions, much would be lost if the multifarious ways the human 'Spirit' can find of communicating and teaching were not allowed to be followed. On the other hand the State, which is of the nature of 'Spirit' itself, embodies all the experiences and happenings that take place in it; it represents the compound expressions of the minds and wills of the citizens, and rules over them, necessarily, for their and its own good. The State therefore has a right and duty to control the educational activities of all individuals and bodies, both during the process of teaching and learning, and at the end, when the results achieved can be assessed. The State has a monopoly in deciding whether its young citizens are properly educated or not; so that no certificate, diploma, or degree has any value in the frame of the national life, unless it has been granted by an authority delegated by the State. The State examination, which had been demanded for so many years on the ground that a serious guarantee of the value of studies must be found, and that equality of opportunity must be given to pupils from private schools and those from State schools, had its theoretical justification in the political and philosophical doctrine of Gentile.

In spite of the universal character of 'Spirit', which embraces all times and countries, the new education Gentile proposed to

give Italian youth was strongly national. In fact, he would say that it is not in spite of, but because of, this universal character that education must be national. Nations issue from 'Spirit', are 'Spirit' itself in its actual life, and trying to forget one's own nation would lead to suicide. This national side of education was emphasized by Gentile in his *Discorsi ai Maestri di Trieste*; and although it seemed justifiable that such an exaggerated stress should be put on nationalism when speaking in a town which had just passed from foreign domination to the national community, the conclusion was easily drawn that in that direction was to be found the only solution for a renewal of Italian culture. 'Let us give birth to a new education, the national, Italian education, on the basis of a national science and culture'; and the objection is not valid which says that science is not national, for it has meaning only as an instrument shaping the conscience of citizens. Thus, the totalitarian claims of national feelings in all fields, including those of abstract science, found a kind of justification in Gentile's philosophical doctrine. It is true that, on the other hand, he insisted, even in his Trieste speeches, on the need of a broad knowledge of other civilizations, past and present, so that the mind should not be restricted in a kind of geographical prison, but all things are to be regarded in the light of national culture.

This nationalistic attitude, the keen desire to give a practical solution to problems of long standing, the elasticity of some of the 'actualist' philosophical dogmas, his personal popularity, and his undeniable merits in the field of education recommended Gentile to those who proposed to re-make Italy and needed to find people who knew how to do it.

### Chapter Three

#### THE NEW SCHOOL SYSTEM

THE conquest of power by the Fascists gave Italian educationists an opportunity of giving effect to their programmes such as they or their predecessors had never enjoyed since the time of Casati. Many of the circumstances were, at least outwardly, similar. As in 1859, the Government in November 1922 had obtained full powers from Parliament, so that the interminable discussions which had wrecked many generous attempts to improve the lot of public education in Italy were easily avoided; however strong the reasons a man might have for opposing the new educational bills, in whole or in part, he was reduced to the rank of a grumbler by the law granting full powers. As in 1859, a long-thought-out plan for the recasting of the whole school system was ripe for practical experiment. As in 1859, a group of men who had set aside their minor differences, or major differences not directly affecting the realm of education, and who had identified their personal ambitions with the promotion of a higher standard of culture for the Italian people, had obtained legislative and executive power. But great as was the resemblance between the two historical situations, the differences, as regards education and the schools, were still greater. The break with the past which the reforms of 1859 had brought about or sanctioned was much more decisive than that which education experienced in 1923. The structure of the educational system built in 1859 and completed in the following fifty years was too wide and strong to be affected in all its parts, or indeed in its main elements. Some of the fundamental problems which had been solved legally needed more than sixty years to be solved in practice, e.g., the problem of illiteracy; and no new philosophical or political system was needed to complete what had been carried on with considerable success in that half-century. The principle of the differentiation of post-primary schools, whether as regards the financial position or the vocation *in nuce* of the young students, was not overcome, in the new ideas, by a more democratic or aristocratic outlook. Thus the new system did not provide a totally different structure for the schools. The changes were manifold and important enough for us to take notice of them, but they would not be so important if they had not been accompanied by the attempt to give a new spirit to the intellectual education

of Italian youth, a freer hand to private educational initiative, and a more efficient control of the State over the proficiency of students. The points we have, therefore, to make clear in connexion with the educational laws of 1923 are the following: (1) The new types of schools and the new fundamental characteristics of the old ones; (2) the contents of the new curricula, in so far as they bring important innovations into the life of the schools; (3) the control of the State by way of examinations ('*esame di Stato*') and the *Scuola Libera*; and (4) reforms in the administration, and the purge of 'inefficient' teachers and officials.

The most momentous changes in the structure of the school system are to be found in the post-primary and secondary schools. Not much was done to alter the face of the universities, although in their administration they acquired a quite different status. As regards the distribution of schools in the country, very little was changed on the whole, apart from the fact that the number of the schools for the training of elementary teachers was drastically reduced.

Pre-elementary schools (kindergartens, nursery schools, and the like) were not affected by the reforms of 1923 as regards their organization. The elementary schools preserved their external structure to a large extent. It was, however, established that all children must, wherever possible, pass through five forms before they were released from their scholastic duty. In fact, the extension to five years, from the normal four years, of elementary school attendance, was enforced for those children who were to continue their studies in the secondary schools. Therefore, the normal age for entering the 'Gymnasiums' or the other schools of a higher degree became eleven instead of ten. The post-primary classes, which were grouped into the *Scuole Popolari* and *Scuole Popolari Professionali*, changed their name into *Classi Integrative di Avviamento Professionale*. On the other hand, there were founded new schools, of a new type, the *Scuole Complementari*, which, as we shall see presently, took the place of the old Technical Schools, and were given a more strictly post-primary character than the latter used to have.

The secondary schools included till 1923, as may be remembered, (1) the Classical 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum, with a course lasting eight years, and with a modern section in the last five forms; (2) the *Scuola Complementare e Normale* for the training of teachers in elementary schools, with a course lasting six years; (3) the Technical School, with a course lasting three years, and giving access to (4) the various types of Technical Institutes, and (5) an ample range of industrial, commercial, and art schools.

The reforms consisted partly in the transformation of these types of schools, with the exception of those under (5) which were not the concern of the Ministry of Education, and partly in the foundation of new types of institutions. The Classic 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum preserved its name and structure unchanged; the *Scuola Complementare e Normale* changed both name and structure, and so did the Technical School; the Technical Institute was provided with a lower course lasting four years and lost one of its sections; the newly-founded types of schools were the Science Lyceum (*Liceo Scientifico*) and the Lyceum for Girls (*Liceo Femminile*); finally, the *Sezione Moderna* of the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum was abolished.

The *Scuola Complementare e Normale* was transformed into the *Istituto Magistrale*, which was divided into two courses: (1) the *Istituto Magistrale Inferiore* of four years (corresponding to the three years of the *Scuola Complementare*), and (2) the *Istituto Magistrale Superiore* of three years (taking the place of the *Scuola Normale*). This organic change was meant to meet the need for a simpler functioning of this type of school. The slow transformation which the Normal School had undergone, the originally ambiguous character of the *Scuole Complementari*, and their incomplete fusion into one single school, especially in places where only the lower or the higher school existed, affected these institutes unfavourably. Their character of training schools for elementary teachers was often 'tainted' with the accusation of being a *refugium peccatorum* for those, especially boys, who did not succeed in other more difficult schools, and wanted to obtain a certificate which might be produced in order to find employment in odd jobs. The similarity between the old *Scuola Complementare* and the Technical School made it a normal practice that boys and girls who did not mean to go on into the Normal School, and had quite different interests and aims from that of becoming teachers, should attend the *Scuola Complementare*. This was avoided in the *Istituto Magistrale Inferiore*, which became meaningless as a school by itself, and had no other *raison d'être* than that of being the preparatory course to the *Istituto Magistrale Superiore*. On the other hand, the increase of one year in the length of studies, coupled with the obligation to attend the fifth form of the elementary schools before passing into the *Istituto Magistrale Inferiore*, meant that the lowest age at which boys and girls could become teachers was raised from sixteen to eighteen.

The Technical School was transformed into the new *Scuola Complementare*. Although the name was taken from the old lower course of the schools for the training of teachers, its mean-

ing was different. The old *Scuola Complementare* was meant to give an education more complete than the elementary schools had done, in order that candidates for the career of teachers should enter the Normal School with a better preparation; the new *Scuola Complementare* was meant to 'complete' the education of those boys and girls who wanted to be one step higher in the way of education than those who attended only the elementary and post-primary classes, but did not intend to go on into higher courses. The Technical School had the double aim of preparing the future pupils of the Technical Institute, and of giving a sufficient training to future clerks and managers of small firms. Only this second aim was allotted to the new *Scuola Complementare*, which became, therefore, one more type of post-elementary school, with a very vocational character and a more defined character of popular culture, a kind of finishing school of a rather low standard.

As the *Scuola Complementare* inherited only one of the tasks of the Technical School, it became necessary to found another kind of school to cater for those who meant to continue their studies in the Technical Institute; this new school was the Lower Technical Institute. Just as in the case of the old *Scuole Complementari* it was considered better to give the Normal Schools a regular lower course, in order to avoid the inconvenience of two different types of school, one of which served partly as an introduction to the other, so in the case of the Technical Schools when considered as preparation for the Technical Institutes it was judged to be more convenient to have one single institute, which would carry the young students from their first entry into the secondary schools right up to the end of their studies. This Lower Technical Institute, again like the *Istituto Magistrale Inferiore* (Training College for Teachers), consisted of four forms, so that the whole course of the Technical Institute lasted eight years, like that of the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum.

The Modern Section of the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum was abolished, as was the Physics and Mathematics Section of the Technical Institute. Their place was taken by the new Science Lyceum, which partook of the characters of both the disappearing sections. It lasted four years, as did the Physics and Mathematics Section, and had no lower course specially designed for it, being therefore an exception to the rule that differentiation between types of studies and schools must start immediately the children left the elementary school. A student could enter the Science Lyceum from any other secondary school, after passing through four forms.

The Lyceum for Girls was a completely new institution. Girls

were admitted to practically all the secondary schools, and several schools were closed to boys. Till 1923, however, there were no schools specially catering for those girls who did not want an education aiming at a career or the university. Apart from a few Royal Colleges, which tended more and more to assimilate themselves to the Normal Schools in respect of their studies, the 'girls of good family' had no other choice except to be educated at home or in schools with a crowd of candidates for a *posto nella vita*. The Lyceum for Girls was meant for these girls, because it was argued that the State should also satisfy the needs of the aristocracy who were not rich enough, or were unwilling, to resort to private education. The course consisted of three years and accepted girls who had already successfully finished four years in other secondary schools.

The provisions of the decree regulating studies in the universities do not present us with an outwardly changed system. The Faculties and the schools remained very much what they had been in the years immediately before the reform. But the fundamentally new thing was the ample autonomy which the universities and similar institutions were granted; that self-government which had been asked for practically since the times of the Casati Law, and towards which the greatest progress had been made by the Ministerial Commission of 1910. Article 1 of the decree enacting the reform of the universities states that 'they are autonomous in their administration, teaching organization, and discipline, within the limits fixed by this decree and under the supervision of the Minister for Education.' The limits were such that ample scope was left for changing the internal structure of the Faculties, and for the setting up of a number of sections and institutions inside the Faculties themselves. The limit, however, which might have wrecked the whole autonomy, was that set by the need of the Minister's approval of the Statutes of each university, so that, in practice, not only the outer form of the universities, the number and names of Faculties, the minima of scholastic years or terms imposed for each Faculty, and a few other general rules remained common to the universities throughout Italy, but the transformation which each of them underwent in the thirteen years of self-government was not so great as to make difficult the return to the centralized system in 1936.

The progress from a lower school to a higher, and from one form to another was regulated in a rather different way from before. It became necessary to pass special final examinations (*esami d'ammissione*) at the end of each two, three, or four years, according to the various types of schools, before being admitted to the higher forms, and greater strictness was required in the



promotion of pupils from one to the other of the intermediate forms. The final examinations, compulsory for all pupils, were to be taken at the following stages: (a) after the fifth form of the elementary school for all those who wanted to enter the secondary schools ('Gymnasium', Lower Technical Institute, Lower Training College for Teachers, *Scuola Complementare*); the examinations were of one single type for all the schools, but those candidates who failed in one important part of it (a written essay in Italian) were allowed to enter the *Scuola Complementare*; (b) after the lower course of the 'Gymnasium' and Training College for Teachers for those who wanted to enter the upper courses; (c) after the fourth form of the Lower Technical Institute for those who wanted to enter the Higher Technical Institute or the Science Lyceum; (d) after the fifth form of the 'Gymnasium' for those who wanted to continue their studies in the Lyceum; and (e) after the second form of the Higher Technical Institute, in order to be allowed to pass into the third form. Although the four main types of schools were clearly distinct from each other, and it was normal for pupils of the Lower Training College for Teachers, for example, to go on into the Higher Training College, it was possible to pass from one type of school to the other by a special examination; if the form into which the student wanted to enter at the time of the change was one of those to which access was obtained through the Entrance Examination he had to pass this examination; otherwise he had to pass an *esame d'idoneità* (examination of ability).

Access to a higher form, except in cases where the entrance examination was needed, was to be obtained without any final examination if the pupil was considered proficient in all and each of the subjects of his form. If, at the end of the scholastic year in June, he was not considered proficient in one or two subjects, he had to pass a further examination ('*esame di riparazione*') in this subject or these subjects before the beginning of the following scholastic year. The pupil who was below standard in June in more than two subjects was not admitted to the higher form, and had to remain in the same form; and so did those who failed in one or both of the subjects in which they had to pass the September examination. Promotion from one form to another was possible, as in the past, only at the end of one scholastic year; not between terms. The completion of the course in each school was marked by a final examination, and the studies made were not legally recognized unless this examination was passed (*esame di maturità, esame di abilitazione magistrale*, etc.). In the university the question of progress from one scholastic year to the other was mainly left to the several universities to be regulated

according to the views of the Academic body, provided the rules were approved by the Minister. On the whole the students had much more liberty to decide the year in which they wanted to pass one or other of the many examinations in special subjects. The final test, however, for most Faculties and *scuole* remained the 'dissertation', i.e., the *tesi di laurea*. The State examinations or qualifying examinations for the different professions at the end of the university courses were no longer the concern of the universities themselves.

## Chapter Four

### THE NEW CURRICULA AND THE 'SPIRITO DELLA RIFORMA'

THE changes effected by Gentile and his collaborators in the structure of the educational system were not intended to be so great as the new spirit which was to give a new life to the schools. The transformation of schools and the creation of new types were meant to meet needs which had been felt for a long time, but might have remained no more than a change of name if the pupil had found in them the same way of teaching, the same ideals, and the same atmosphere. Many things, however, remained unchanged. School attendance, regulated by time-tables very much like the old ones, the subjects to be studied, not reduced either as regards their number or the bulk of details, the individualistic spirit by virtue of which every pupil was rather one single dependant of the teacher than a comrade of his fellows, the distance between the student and the professors, the disregard of any social training, and many usages and customs of the old schools did not facilitate a re-birth of education. What was new, was a thorough revision of the curricula for most schools and an imposition of more State control over the pupils. The directions (*avvertenze*) accompanying the new syllabuses were meant to define the characteristics of the various types of schools, and the 'spirit of the reform' is to be found in these recommendations to the teachers rather than in the various curricula. But it is in these, more than in the directions, that pupils and teachers found their material. The preoccupation of the examination was so overriding, that it was much more important to learn how to answer many questions than to be inspired by the new spirit.

One principle fundamental to Gentile's view of the schools is, as we had occasion to see, that the teachers must be free in their work. Syllabuses must not stand between the master who 'lives' his truth and the pupil. Therefore, syllabuses in which the curricula are defined in great detail are not programmes for the teacher, but only for the examiner. The pupil is, as such, free from the compulsion of learning so many data; the teacher has to bring the pupil to maturity according to his own methods and principles; it is, however, laid down that a child at a given stage must be able to show his or her maturity by answering the questions that can be formulated in the frame of the programmes of

examination (*programmi d'esame*). In practice, as was inevitable, the programmes of examination became very much programmes of teaching, and the teachers felt themselves bound, almost as much as before, to follow the details of the syllabuses in their teaching. It is true, however, that the syllabuses of some subjects were less detailed, and a choice between several courses was open to the teacher or even to the pupil himself.

The subjects to be taught in the elementary schools are indicated (a) in the decree of 1 October 1923, No. 2185, especially in articles 2, 3, and 7 to 10, and (b) in the decree of 6 May 1923, in the section dealing with the syllabuses for the entrance examination to the secondary schools. The former provides the teacher with the main principles on which he must base his work. First of all it is stated that elementary education, from the beginning to the end, will be founded on and crowned by the teaching of the Christian doctrine, according to the Roman Catholic tradition, except for those children whose parents declare that they will themselves take on the task of religious instruction. Subordinate to this, but still in the front rank, will be put the teaching of music, drawing, and gymnastics. In this way the elementary school is to acquire quite a new character. The details for the application of these principles are not many, and should allow a large amount of freedom to the teachers. For the 'preparatory degree', i.e., for the kindergartens for children between four and six, the subjects suggested are the simplest prayers, singing and listening to music, free drawing, gymnastic games, easy exercises in manual work, gardening, looking after animals, some general knowledge, and correction of popular prejudices. In the three lower forms of the elementary school itself, religious instruction includes the fundamental prayers and the main principles of Christian doctrine, short and clear narratives taken from the Gospels, tales from the Old Testament, and the explanation of the Lord's Prayer. Reading and writing are to be accompanied by translations from the local dialect into the Italian language. The 'general knowledge' (*nozioni varie*) which the children must acquire includes a few precepts regarding agriculture and industry, the arts and most famous monuments. History is taught only where there are no higher forms. The children must learn by heart the national hymns and a few poems, and study some arithmetic, the metric system, and a little geography. The syllabus for the fourth and fifth forms includes the history of religion, with special attention to the traditions of local saints, the principles of the Catholic moral and dogmatic doctrine based on the Ten Commandments and the parables of the Gospel, and a few details on the Sacraments

and the Catholic rite. History and geography are, on the whole, restricted to Italy and the countries towards which the local population is accustomed to emigrate; the economic and administrative structure of these latter countries must be known by the children. For the rest, they must learn a little about the Italian constitution, the political and administrative organization, the system of Courts of Justice, and the elements of citizenship; some natural science, and arithmetic and geometry. The teaching of drawing must be given with a view to its application to crafts, and not only, as in the lower forms, left mainly to the free imagination of the pupils. All through the five forms, training in writing in Italian must not follow the old pattern of short essays on given themes; the pupils must write according to their own experience and keep a sort of diary of their life. Needlework is compulsory for girls.

The indications given in the concise syllabus for the entrance examination to the secondary schools complete in some details those for the elementary schools themselves, and show that, as regards the standard of knowledge required of the children, there is not such a great difference from what was required before 1923. It is, however, recommended that the examiners should pay attention to the candidate's level of understanding and to his facility and clarity of expression rather than to the amount of knowledge his memory is capable of mastering. For the Italian language, the candidate must be able to write correctly from dictation (which should be fairly quick), ten lines of a modern author comprehensible to children; to read with good pronunciation a passage of prose or an easy poem; to give an account of something he has previously read; to translate into Italian a passage from his own dialect, or to do some exercise implying a good knowledge of the main rules of Italian grammar. In mathematics, he must be able to make calculations showing knowledge of the main operations, fractions and their conversion into decimal numbers, the decimal metric system, rules for the area and volume of regular solids, the pyramid, prism, cone, sphere, and cylinder. A conversation of fifteen minutes with the examiner is the test of the candidate's general culture: for this he has to know the most important physical phenomena in connexion with the life and needs of men, he must have some clear geographical knowledge, especially of his province and of the world-lines of communication; the civic institutions (family, State, commune); he must know about the most important figures in history (especially of the Italian *Risorgimento*), in art, in religion, and in politics. Moreover, he must be able to copy an ornamental drawing which the teacher draws at the same time

on the black-board, and then to draw an object of his own choice. The candidates who want to enter the *Scuola Complementare* are exempt from the last test, which consists of a short essay on some topic related to the oral examination or to the children's experience.

The higher forms of the elementary schools, the so-called *classi integrative di avviamento professionale* are supposed to have, as their name implies a vocational character. They may be of different kinds, according to the needs of the various localities, but specialized teaching is only one element in the curriculum, and has to be as practical as possible. For the rest, the *classi integrative* try to develop and bring to a somewhat higher standard the same subjects that are studied in the lower forms. If no well-defined character is required by the economic life of the inhabitants, the vocational character of these forms consists in at least two years' teaching of drawing applied to work and mechanical crafts, or theoretical and practical knowledge of electrical apparatus, agricultural training, seamanship, tailoring, housewifery, etc. Wherever possible, the children should be allowed to choose the courses they prefer. As these schools are not intended to compete with the special 'vocational' schools, and they must preserve their character of 'elementary' courses, they do not qualify for any special activity or career; they are simply meant to give to every child who can attend them such general or special instruction as he may need in the life which he will be able to build up by himself; they are no more than a complement to the primary education of the elementary lower forms and to the technical experience children may obtain at home.

The *Scuola Complementare* is, from the cultural point of view, one step higher than the *classi integrative*, and is meant to provide the children with something more than the minimum of education needed for life in the modern world. It does not give access to any other school, and provides those who pass the final examination (*esame di licenza complementare*) with a diploma which may be useful for many State appointments in the lower grade of the hierarchy of State officials, and other clerical careers. The syllabus for the final examinations shows, however, that when this type of school was founded the dominant aim was to give a broad general culture, rather than a technical knowledge with a practical purpose. It includes the following subjects:

(a) Italian language and literature: Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*; one tragedy by Alfieri; some books for the young, chosen from among those by De Amicis, Nievo, Stoppani, Collodi, Abba, Fucini, Lessona, Dupré, Alfani, Lessona, and (in translation)

Franklin, Samuel Smiles, and others; a few episodes from the *Divine Comedy*, *Orlando Furioso*, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Parini's *Il Giorno*, and from the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Aeneid*, and Plutarch's *Lives* in modern translations.

(b) History, geography, and State institutions: an outline of history, including the main facts which led to the Roman 'unification of the Mediterranean', the birth of Christianity, the Middle Ages, the foundation of the most important modern States, the French Revolution, the constitutional problem in Great Britain, France, and Belgium, the Italian *Risorgimento* and the post-war settlement; the broad lines of world geography and a more detailed knowledge of the economic, political, and religious structure of the European States; Italian electoral law, military obligations, the jury system, the financial structure of Italy, and the fundamental principles of civil and penal law.

(c) Foreign languages (French, or English, or German, or Spanish, or Greek, or Serbo-Croat): the candidate must be able to translate a letter into the language without the use of a dictionary, to read and explain a passage from an author previously read, to have a simple talk with the examiner, and to write a few sentences under dictation; he must know some details about the countries in which the language is spoken.

(d) Mathematics: calculations with fractions, square roots, numerical proportions, main properties of the circle and polygons, Pythagoras's theorem, perpendicular planes.

(e) Physics and biology: the main facts and laws in the theory of heat, the theory of lenses, steam engines and electrical engines; general biology, the animal body and, in detail, the human body; the characteristics of the most important species of animals, plants and trees.

(f) Economics and book-keeping: the various types of firms, the fundamentals of financial science, banking; calculation of interests and discounts; practical training in book-keeping for a small firm.

(g) Drawing: sketch of an object and copy in scale.

(h) Short-hand: eighty words a minute, and an exact transcription in long-hand within ninety minutes of a ten-minutes' dictation.

(h) Handwriting in several styles, especially for office purposes.

The aims of the *Scuola Complementare* are defined in the General Directions at the end of the programmes in these terms: 'When he leaves this school the youth must be able to live as a citizen, and work as an artisan, small trader, shop assistant, etc. He must have become acquainted with a world rich in interest-

ing things and ideas and have found its expression in great minds; . . . in order to be a man and a fellow of other men, he must be able to understand the mind, feelings and thoughts in faces and words. . . .'

The Classical 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum is, in the words of the Directions to the syllabus of its final examinations, 'an institute for humanistic and historical culture. It prepares young people for the highest tasks of civil life and for the liberal professions. It prepares the moral man, who is conscious of his position in history, and has to know, therefore, of the painful toil endured by the human race from the cave down to modern civilization, which does not consist in just a certain number of technical achievements, but in a deeper sense of the communion of souls, coupled with a sense of freedom and social duties, and in a deeper consciousness of one's own personality.' In the Lower 'Gymnasium', the teaching of the Italian language must be used as a means to lead the pupils to an understanding (*a*) of the ancient world, studied in Italian translations of Homer, Virgil, Plutarch's *Lives*, and Shakespeare's tragedies on classical subjects, and in a tragedy by Alfieri by means of which the pupil must realize how fate was felt to dominate the human world, without crushing it, how men found virtue in sacrifice and raised themselves to the political life of the *polis*; and (*b*) of the modern world seen through Goldoni and Manzoni, where a new sense of life, divinity, and community will be found to be coupled with more refined and delicate feelings. Nothing must be learnt mechanically; what is learnt by heart must become a stable possession of the mind, through a repeated enjoyment of its beauty. The technical side of language must not interfere with the real aim for which it is studied, and therefore no exercises in grammar may be done on authors studied for historical or literary purposes. In the study of history the student is required to read books or passages by authors who lived in the several periods, so that an insight may be gained into the life, public and private, of the various peoples and ages. The study of foreign languages must be accompanied by that of the civilizations and habits that they express.

It is not possible to give here at length the syllabuses for the various subjects studied in this section of the 'Gymnasium', or indeed in any other school; but a few examples are necessary to show how the legislator thought it possible to reach the aims set down in the 'Directions'. The following are the historical items on which the candidate at the final examination for admission to the Higher 'Gymnasium' is expected to be able to answer 'with clarity and understanding': (1) Life in pre-classic antiquity;



some facts about primitive civilizations in the Italian peninsula; (2) Greek civilization; the *polis*; the laws of Lycurgus and Solon; life in Periclean Athens; the army and navy, trade and industries, art, theatre and games; the State religion, mysteries and oracles; (3) Roman civilization; the fundamental institutions in the time of the kings; the Republic; the magistrates; the army; family life; slavery; religion; (4) the life and religion of the Jews; habits of the first Christians; (5) life in the Middle Ages; the castles; agriculture; industries and trade; chivalry; (6) the Italian communes; (7) life in the Renaissance; the courts; (8) Italian life in the age of decadence; (9) French life before the Revolution and the changes brought about by the latter; (10) life and ideals in Italy during the *Risorgimento*. For the examination in Italian apart from (a) the items mentioned above (i.e., the whole or large extracts from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, several episodes from the *Aeneid*, two parallel lives by Plutarch, one of Shakespeare's Roman tragedies, one of Alfieri's tragedies, one of Goldoni's comedies and Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi*) the candidate must (b) have read and studied selected passages, in prose and verse, from Italian and foreign writers of the nineteenth century, and be able to explain the contents, characters, institutions, places, customs, and moral and religious feelings of all the works and passages he has read; (c) be prepared to recite by heart prose passages and poems of a high artistic value; and (d) be able to analyse from a grammatical point of view sentences and clauses of all kinds.

From the syllabuses for the final examination giving access to the Lyceum and for the *esame di maturità classica* the following may be chosen to show to what extent and in what detail some of the main subjects must be studied.

History for the entrance examination for the Classical Lyceum: (1) civilizations of the ancient world on the Mediterranean shores; Egyptian, Phœnician and Jewish civilizations; (2) Mycenaean civilization and the origins of Greek civilization; (3) the *polis* and Greek colonization; Greek life from the eighth to the end of the sixth centuries; (4) the Lacedaemonian and Athenian States; (5) Greece and Persia; (6) Greece after the victories over the Persians, Athenian hegemony, and Pericles; (7) the decay of liberty in Greece; the struggles between Sparta and Athens; Spartan hegemony; Theban hegemony; (8) the spreading of Greek civilization to the East; Greece and Macedonia, Philip, Alexander; (9) the States of the Diadochi; the Aetolian and Achaean Leagues, and the Roman conquest; (10) Greek civilization during the Hellenistic period; (11) ancient Italy; pre-

Roman civilizations; the Etruscans; Greek colonies in Sicily and Southern Italy; (12) origins of Rome; traditions, the kings and institutions of that period; (13) origin and development of the republican organization; patricians and plebeians, new magistracies; (14) the conquest of Italy; (15) Rome and Carthage; (16) organization of Rome after the achievement of primacy in the Mediterranean; Roman colonies compared with Greek colonies; social struggles and civil wars; attempts at reform by the Gracchi; Jugurtha's war; Marius and Sulla; (17) from the Republic to the Empire; Pompey, Caesar, first and second triumvirate; Augustus; (18) The Empire; characteristics and vicissitudes; administration of the provinces; Roman Law; economic organization of the Roman Empire; wars for the defence of the frontiers; (19) imperial despotism and military tyranny; disappearance of the middle classes; latifundia; compulsory organization of work; slavery; new exotic cults; the Germans and the Empire; (20) origins of Christianity; (21) Diocletian and Constantine; the Roman Christian Empire; opposition between East and West; end of the Western Empire.

The items of the syllabus for some subjects for the *esame di maturità classica*, at the end of the Classical Lyceum are as follows:

HISTORY: (1) Christianity and the organization of the Church in the first centuries A.D.; (2) the Germans: their organization as compared with that of the Romans; the Roman barbaric kingdoms; (3) the Byzantine empire: the *Corpus Juris Justiniani*; (4) the Arabs: religious and political characteristics; (5) feudalism and its spread over Europe; feudal economy; (6) the dissolution of the feudal economy; chivalry; (7) the maritime republics: economic and political evolution; trade after the tenth century; (8) the struggle of the Catholic Church for an autonomous organization; the Church as a moral unity of Europe and its political bearings; (9) the new economy of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries: the communes in their struggle against the old political systems of Church and Empire; (10) the artisans; origins of industry; mercantile expansion; travellers and explorers; (11) Guelphs and Ghibellines; Frederick Barbarossa and the Papacy; (12) religious movements in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries: their moral and political importance; (13) Normans, Suabians, Angevins; Sicilian revolution; decadence of the southern State; (14) the new States in northern Italy; (15) Church and State in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries: political crises and their repercussions in the religious sphere; (16) the Tuscan State; Ciompi and Medici; (17) human-

ism and the Renaissance in culture, religion, and politics; the State as a 'work of art'; (19) the French monarchy; (20) the English monarchy; Magna Carta and its developments; (21) the Spanish monarchy; Portugal; the House of Austria; (22) the Turks and the fall of Constantinople; (23) the discovery of America; the 'Ocean States' and the diminished importance of the Mediterranean; political consequences; (24) the Italian States in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; (25) the Reformation in Bohemia, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Poland; the doctrine of Lutheranism; (26) the Counter-Reformation and its doctrine: the profession of faith of the Council of Trent; the Roman catechism, the Jesuits; (27) political repercussions of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation; (28) Italy during the Spanish hegemony; (29) the policy of the Venetian Republic, Rome, and Savoy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; (30) the Dutch republic; its constitution and policy; (31) the English monarchy; its organization; English political philosophy; religion and political organization in England; (32) the French absolute monarchy; conception of the State at home and abroad; influence of France in Europe; (33) dissolution of the old unifying forces in Europe (Roman Law and the Catholic Church) and the rise of the new economic, political, and cultural unity; (34) the Wars of Succession and the consequences for Italy; the fate of Poland; (35) agriculture, trade, and industry in eighteenth-century Europe; (36) European culture; the physiocrats; the Encyclopaedists; (37) Italian culture in the second half of the eighteenth century; economic and religious liberalism; ideas of Italian unity; (38) the American colonies; their organization and influence on European life; American revolution; (39) the French Revolution; (40) the Napoleonic era and its consequences for Europe, and especially for Italy; (41) the Restoration; the 'International' of the Holy Alliance and the 'International' of Liberalism; secret organizations aiming at European and Italian unity; (42) Mazzini and Gioberti; (43) insurrections and revolutions; the wars of 1848 and 1849; (44) the various ideologies (republican, monarchical, federative, unitarian) from 1849 to 1859; (45) growth of Italian unity (1859-70); political organization of Europe in 1860; (46) the Roman Question and the Law of Guarantees; (47) Italy from 1870 to 1914; economy, industry, demography, emigration, home and colonial policy; (48) Europe from 1870 to 1914; political, economic, and moral forces; internal and foreign policy of the most important States, especially as regards colonial problems; (49) the World War; economic and moral forces; ideologies; the new organization of the civilized world.

ITALIAN LITERATURE: (1) the development of aesthetic doctrines from the Middle Ages to the present times; history of 'literary taste'; (2) at least ten complete works by authors included in the following list, and passages by the others (historical facts and aesthetic valuation of the authors studied): The poets of the Sicilian and Tuscan schools; Dante (at least one full *Cantica* and ten Cantos from each of the others must be known in detail); the *Fioretti* of S. Francis; Dino Compagni; Petrarch, Boccaccio, Sacchetti, L. B. Alberti, Boiardo, Lorenzo de' Medici, Poliziano, Pulci, Savonarola, Michelangelo, Cellini, Vasari, Ariosto, Tasso, Bandello, Doni, Grazzini, Caro, Castiglione, Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Bruno, Boccalmi, Chiabrera, Marino, Tassoni, Galileo, Sarpi, Metastasio, Vico, Parini, Pietro Verri, Goldoni, Gaspere Gozzi, Alfieri, Cuoco, Giordani, Monti, Foscolo, Manzoni, Leopardi, Mazzini, Balbo, Gioberti, Pellico, D'Azeglio, Tommaseo, Berchet, Giusti, Nievo, Settembrini, Abba, De Sanctis, Carducci, Pascoli, Fogazzaro, D'Annunzio, Verga.

PHILOSOPHY: (1) Theory of knowledge: the candidate shall comment upon passages from two of the following works or groups of works, giving an historical and theoretical picture of the doctrine expounded therein: Plato's *Euthyphron* and *Theaetetus*, *Protagoras* and *Meno*, *Greater Hippias* and *Phaedrus*, *Philebus* and *Politicus*; Aristotle's *De Anima* (selections), *Metaphysics* (selections); Bacon's *Novum Organum* (selections); Descartes's *Discourse on Method* and first book of the *Principia Philosophiae*, *Meditations* and selections from the *Objections and Answers*; Spinoza's *Ethics* (first part and selections from the second); Vico's *Autobiography* and selections from the *Scienza Nuova*; Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (selections), *Prolegomena*; Hegel's *Encyclopädie* (selections); Lucretius, Bruno, Galileo, Bacon, Locke, Leibnitz, Berkeley, Hume, Condillac, Galluppi, Schopenhauer, Rosmini, Gioberti. (2) The moral problem: the candidate must be able to comment, theoretically and historically, on two works chosen from a list including writings by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Epicurus, Marcus Aurelius, S. Paul and the Evangelists, Hobbes, Leibnitz, Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, Manzoni, Fichte, Humboldt, Hegel, Rosmini, Spaventa.

THE HISTORY OF ART is restricted to Italian art from the beginnings of Christian painting, sculpture, and architecture down to the present day; but within these limits the students must be able to recognize in their stylistic characteristics and to appraise from the historical and aesthetic point of view the works of a very large number of painters, sculptors, and architects. For

instance, these are the names of painters of the fifteenth century with whose works the candidates must be familiar: Masolino, Masaccio, Fra' Angelico, Benozzo Gozzoli, Andrea del Castagno, Paolo Uccello, Domenico Veneziano, Pier della Francesca, Baldovinetti, Luca Signorelli, Filippo Lippi, Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio, Perugino, Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, Rosselli, and Ghirlandajo. Beside these, the painters of the other regional schools (Umbrian, Paduan, Ferrarese, Bolognese, Venetian, Lombard) must be studied in some detail by the students of the various provinces.

**LATIN AND GREEK LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE.** The number of works and parts of works to be read in the original is by no means large: one or two books of Homer, one Greek tragedy, one book of Herodotus or of another historian, a few hundred lines of lyric poets, are nearly all that the student is expected to have 'translated' in the three years of his Lyceum course in Greek, and not much more than that in Latin. But the works should be known against their historical background and appraised as to their artistic and philosophical value. For this purpose a rather large knowledge of the history of literature, both Latin and Greek is required, from the beginnings down to the Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries, and even later, since the choice of Latin 'classics' might stretch as far as the humanists and modern Latin poets. Greek and Latin institutions, customs, religion, and art must be familiar in their broad lines to the student.

Although the Classical Lyceum is primarily the school of *litterae humanae*, the syllabuses for scientific subjects are by no means restricted to a very few elements. Mathematics include plane trigonometry, the theory of irrational numbers, similarity of solids, and calculations with logarithms. A good knowledge of elementary physics, chemistry, biology, mineralogy, and physical geography is also required from the candidate. Political economy, which is considered as a kind of appendix to philosophy, is to be studied on very general lines; the main theories of the last two centuries and the fundamental laws of economic life are practically all that the student is expected to know.

The Science Lyceum has, of course, much broader syllabuses for scientific subjects. Mathematics includes the fundamentals of spherical trigonometry, exponential equations, and the more elementary operations in the infinitesimal calculus. Experimental physics and chemistry, and biology are much more detailed than in the Classical Lyceum. But it is expressly stated that the 'logical understanding' of the facts and laws is more important than the knowledge of many details. Therefore, the study of

philosophy, and especially of the problems of science, has quite an important share in the syllabus. The candidate is expected to have clear ideas about the problem of science in antiquity (Greek mathematics, geography, chemistry, physics, astronomy), in the Middle Ages, and especially in the Renaissance and modern world (Renaissance and naturalism: Telesio, Campanella, Copernicus, Gilbert; the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems: Galileo; the problem of method: Bacon and Descartes; Modern Science; recent theories: Croce, Maxwell, Mach, Poincaré). The candidate must know and be able to comment on two philosophical works, one on theory of knowledge, and one on the moral problem. Drawing must be studied both as a practical and as an historical course in architecture and the so-called minor arts.

The syllabuses for the Training College for Teachers (*Istituto Magistrale*) are not very different from those of the Classical Lyceum as regards Italian literature, history, biology, geography, and Latin language and literature, although they are not quite as weighty. The syllabus for the study of philosophy is directed partly to the educational problem. Theory of knowledge must be viewed mainly from the angle of the 'teachings of science', and the moral problem must be considered as the problem of the formation of character. The texts on which the candidate must be prepared to answer questions and to comment must be six chosen from works by Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, S. Paul, Comenius, Descartes, Locke, Leibnitz, Basedow, Spinoza, Kant, Vico, Rousseau, Galluppi, Cuoco, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Herbert, Fichte, Schelling, Necker de Saussure, Richter, Rosmini, Spaventa, Gioberti, Royce, Croce, Capponi, Lambruschini, Mazzini, De Sanctis, Gabelli, Ardigò, James, E. Caird, Arnold, Laberthonnière, Boutroux. The six texts must be chosen so that for each of the fundamental problems of philosophy, religious, aesthetic, moral, educational, and epistemological, the candidate has read one classic beside one text of a modern educationist.

Mathematics, physics, and chemistry have a considerably narrower syllabus than in the Classical Lyceum. One foreign language (French, German, or English; in a few Training Colleges, Spanish or Croat or Slovene) is studied only in the lower course and has practically the same syllabus as in the 'Gymnasium': a knowledge of grammar is required as the basis for conversation and the reading of a few classics. Theory of music and singing are regular subjects for the whole Training College, as befits their importance for future teachers in elementary schools. At the end of the seven years the candidate must be able to write from dictation some easy piece of music, to read

and sing impromptu some bars of average difficulty, and to explain how children's voices can be educated; he must have also some acquaintance with the whole history of music. It is not compulsory, but recommended, that the students should learn to play an instrument. Drawing is compulsory and the candidate at the end of his studies must know how to illustrate a tale, draw some tools in common use, and draw on a blackboard some models which can be copied with ease by children up to eleven years of age.

The philosophical, humanistic, and artistic, education received in the Training College is meant to give the would-be master and mistress those intellectual and moral habits and a background which will produce an efficient teacher, rather than the 'old-fashioned' practical training and the 'barren' study of pedagogical rules.

The Lower Technical Institute aims at giving the boy and girl of eleven to fourteen or fifteen the fundamentals for an 'historical consciousness'; it is not required that they should acquire the special taste for classical studies and aesthetic values which is characteristic of the 'Gymnasium', and partly of the *Istituto Magistrale*. Students are trained to draw for their 'general culture' and as a preparation for technical drawing in the agricultural section of the Higher Technical Institute. Arithmetic has a practical character, algebra and geometry a logical one. The syllabus for Italian language and literature includes six works (if foreign, in Italian translation) or extensive selections from works by Homer, Hesiod, Plutarch, Virgil, Dante, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso, Goldoni, Alfieri, Manzoni, Shakespeare, Molière, Cervantes, and Goethe. The study of Latin must include passages by Cicero, and several of the following authors: Livy, Caesar, the younger Pliny, Cornelius Nepos, Sallust, Catullus, Virgil, Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid. History is restricted to the ancient world (Greeks, Romans, and Jews down to the origins of Christianity). Mathematics extends to the systems of equations of the first degree, calculation of square roots, and inscription of the decagon in the circle. For the foreign language the student must have read at least four works. Shorthand is compulsory, at a speed of eighty words a minute.

The Higher Technical Institute has a practical character, but this must be mitigated 'in order that the natural abstractness of such studies may be corrected'. Therefore, while the reading of works of a scientific and technical character is given more prominence, students must read widely in history and literature. The syllabus for Italian language and literature includes: (1) selected passages from Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ariosto,

Tasso, Parini, Alfieri, Goldoni, Foscolo, Leopardi, Manzoni, Carducci, and Pascoli; (2) one work, or connected passages from one work, by one of the following authors: Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Vasari, Cellini, Galileo: and (3) another work or connected passages by one of the following: Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Beccaria, Cuoco, Mazzini, Gioberti, Balbo, d'Azeglio, and Amari. The history syllabus includes (1) a short account of the history of science from ancient times to the present day; (2) a short account of the history of religion (the religion of the *polis* and the mysteries, Christianity, Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Mohammedanism); (3) history of law (the *polis*, Roman State, Byzantine Empire, Barbaric Kingdoms, Feudalism, the Maritime Republics, Communes, Seignuries, absolute Monarchies in Europe, constitutional law in England, Belgium, France, and Italy; (4) the great discoveries; (5) reading of books on history and historical geography.

Mathematics and physics have a syllabus nearly as large as that of the Science Lyceum, but with a more practical character. Of the other subjects some are different, some have a different syllabus for the various sections of the Technical Institute, in accordance with their special characteristics. The syllabus for the commercial section includes two languages, political economy, science of finance, statistics, constitutional and civil law, and of course a thorough training in book-keeping. In the agricultural section, apart from the special subjects connected with agriculture and farming, the programme includes some architectural drawing, some astronomy, and general and human biology.

The Lyceum for Girls is entered after an examination in Italian, Latin, history, geography, drawing, and music on syllabuses similar to those for admission to the higher course of the *Istituto Magistrale*. The aim of this type of school being to provide the girls with a general culture, the final examination must be a test of the candidate's ability to appreciate the best writers of European literature, and to have clear ideas about the world they are going to live in and in which they must have a 'moral influence'. The curriculum includes the Italian and Latin languages and literature, philosophy and history, with syllabuses rather more restricted than those of the *Istituto Magistrale*; and also two modern languages, political economy and laws, drawing, the history of art, music, dancing, and quite a vast programme of needlework and housekeeping.

The 'new spirit', the so-called *spirito della riforma*, lay only partly in the curricula and syllabuses. So much of the old system was preserved in the subjects and in the details to be studied in the several schools that if the previous syllabuses are compared



with the new ones it is not easy to detect at a first glance the signs of a spiritual revolution. The most striking facts in this aspect of the new order of studies are the following. Latin, philosophy, and literary history studied in the authors themselves became much more prominent than they were before. Latin was a privileged study until 1923; only the students of the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum had the benefits of its formative and refining influence and laboured through the difficulties of its grammatical system as taught, on German patterns, in the Italian schools. Now not only the schools which aimed more specifically at the intellectual and moral education of youth, i.e., the 'Gymnasium'-Lyceum and the Training College, but even the Lower Technical School had this share of humanistic studies. The study of the Latin language was meant to become more 'human' than it had been: the reading of classics and the study of the life they revealed was to become the real aim of familiarity with the language. This was not, however, to be attained in the Lower Technical Institute, where most of the pupils would have stopped studying it after four years; only those who continued their studies in the Science Lyceum would go on with it; those who entered the Higher Technical Institute were left with as much Latin as could be absorbed between the ages of eleven and fifteen from the grammar-book and a few dozen pages and hundreds of lines of Latin authors. Philosophy became a quite new thing in the Classical Lyceum and the Science Lyceum, and took the place of the old 'particular' and abstract sciences' of morals and pedagogics in the Training College. In all these schools philosophy was meant to be the most important subject. It was not, indeed, a 'subject' to be studied, but a set of problems with which the students themselves had to deal under the guidance both of their teachers and of the authors they had to read. So, in the mind of the legislator, the student had to find his way through the mazes of the several fundamental problems of philosophy, which were those given prominence by the idealistic philosophy. In fact, if the indications given in the syllabus were to be followed, the student of the Classical Lyceum who used to study three volumes, written by some modern author of school-books on the traditional scheme of logic, psychology, and morals, had now to learn how problems were set and discussed, and, especially, to read works written by the greatest philosophers of all time and to study some history of philosophy, in order to see these works in their right perspective. And the girl or boy of the Training College, who was accustomed to learn many facts about child-psychology, the accepted principles of morals, the methods of teaching this or that subject to pupils of elementary schools,

and had hardly any idea that fundamentals could be discussed or doubted even in the class-room or in pondering on the school books at home, would from henceforth learn much more about the great masters of doubt, Socrates, Descartes, or Kant, than about unchangeable commandments and natural laws ruling human behaviour and education.

The classics of Italian literature, and, to a certain extent, those of foreign literatures as well, found in the new curricula much more room than they had in the past. In the lower forms of the secondary schools more time was devoted, before the reform, to the formal study of the language, its grammar, vocabulary, rhetorical forms, and stereotyped 'higher style'. In the upper forms, especially in the Lyceum, apart from the *Divine Comedy* and scanty selections from other authors, the main work for the student was to swallow a lengthy and quite detailed history of Italian literature, which gave names, facts, and characteristics of authors and periods, without being completed and made alive by the actual reading of the authors mentioned. From now on, grammar, stylistics, and the chronicle of facts and men become a secondary matter; the student has to approach directly a much greater number of authors, and learn through them how to think and write.

Other changes of a certain importance brought about by the new curricula are the introduction, on a larger scale, of artistic education, in both elementary and secondary schools. Drawing, whether spontaneous or geometrical or imitative, has a larger share than it used to have in the Training College, Science Lyceum, and Technical Institute; and becomes a fundamental feature in the elementary schools where it had been in the past almost entirely neglected. The history of art had never entered the schools before 1923. Now it is taught in the Classical Lyceum as quite an important subject, and completes the historical survey of the great human activities, side by side with political, literary, and philosophical history. In the Science Lyceum it serves the purpose of giving a broader historical knowledge and of developing artistic taste. Music too became an important element in elementary education, and acquired some ground in the *Istituto Magistrale*. The emphasis laid upon the new methods of studying poetry was not perhaps a gain from the point of view of development of artistic taste. The need for a closer study of poetry, on the lines of Croce's *Aesthetics*, was emphasized by the changes in the kind of 'essays' to be written by students in most schools. They were to be trained to write so-called 'aesthetic analyses' of poems or passages of prose with an artistic value; and an essay of this kind is at least an alternative test at the final

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examination in the Classical Lyceum and Training College. This requirement brought about particular attention to the poets' way of expressing their imagination in words. The historical outlook invested nearly all subjects. While in the past it was practically restricted—in the schools—to political history and, in the case of the study of Italian, to literary history, now the students have to see, in their 'historical light', the facts of art (history of art), whether connected with the other activities of the past, as in the Classical Lyceum, or with the study of drawing itself, as in the Science Lyceum; in the Training College the study of music is completed with some history of music; all authors studied for philosophy or literature must be considered in their historical setting; political economy in the Classical Lyceum and Science Lyceum includes some history of economic theories. The history of Latin and Greek literature has become one important part in the curricula for the two languages; and even in the *Scuole Complementari* the study of a modern language must not be left without a connexion with the life of the people who speak it. Scientific education in the Science Lyceum is considered complete only if the student knows something about the history of science in the Western world. The religious outlook is absent from the secondary schools, although the reformers remembered the earlier partisan exclusion of all Christian authors from the syllabuses of Latin and philosophy. The introduction of religious instruction in the elementary schools may prove to have changed the character of primary education in a way quite different from that which the reformer expected and desired. The idea that religion should be a first practical step towards the height of philosophical conceptions and studies, good as it may have been in providing the way for a compromise between the claims of the Church and those of the defenders of the secular school, is too limited to give a real solution to the problem of religious or non-religious education.

Thus, the philosophical and educational doctrine of the 'idealists', and especially of Gentile, influenced the curricula for the schools in many ways. This is not to say that the transformation was total and radical. In spite of the many words used in the 'Directions' to proclaim that the details are not as important as the comprehension of the whole and the understanding of problems, and that the study of 'sterile rules of grammar' is to be abolished as such, although the knowledge of them is to be presupposed for a proper insight into the meaning and value of literary and historical productions; and in spite of the claim that the 'syllabuses' are indications for the examiners and candidates, but not compulsory in all details, the fact is that the teachers and

students who want to follow their guidance have in practice to continue very much on the lines they followed in the past. The subjects, moreover, taught in the secondary schools are very largely the same and, apart from the emphasis laid on one or the other in words, the proportion of work required for science or literature or language has not been altered very fundamentally.

The syllabuses, however, were not the main point in the reform, at least in the minds of the legislators; according to their ideas the 'revolution' in education was to be seen more in the attitude of teachers and students than in the formalities of printed lists of authors and suggestions.

## Chapter Five

### PUPILS AND TEACHERS IN THE 'NEW SCHOOL'

IT was hoped that the attitude of both students and teachers towards school-life would change completely as a result of the reform. But too many elements remained the same and some of the new factors did not have the expected effects. The kind of work done in the class-rooms and at home remained in many ways the same. The time-tables were altered considerably, but not in such a way as to confine school-work to school hours, or to leave the students much more freedom for home-life. The proportion of the time allotted in school to the different subjects was, of course, modified in order to meet the requirements of the various examinations; but even here the change was not very great, apart from the Training College. The time-unit for progression from form to form was still the year, divided into three terms merely for secondary purposes. The school year started, as before, towards the beginning of October and ended towards the beginning of June (end of June for the elementary schools). Vacations in the course of the school year remained very short: about ten days at Christmas and a week at Easter, to which must be added about fifteen days of national and religious holidays spread over the whole year. A daily average of four hours in school was required, and these were employed, with few exceptions, in the lessons delivered by the teachers and in the questioning of pupils to find out whether they had paid attention in school, and (still more important) done their homework properly. The following tables give the number of weekly periods allotted to each subject in the several forms of the various secondary schools.

	SCUOLA COMPLEMENTARE						<i>Forms</i>		
							<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Italian Language . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	4	3
History and Geography . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	4	3
Foreign Language . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	4	4
Mathematics . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	3	3
Nature . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.		2	2
Book-keeping . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.		3	3
Drawing . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.	4	3	3
Handwriting . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.	2		
Shorthand . . . . .	.	.	.	.	.	.		1	2

## 'GYMNASIUM' AND LYCEUM

	<i>Forms</i>					<i>Lyceum</i>		
	'Gymnasium'							
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3
Italian Language and Literature	7	7	7	5	5	4	4	3
Latin Language and Literature	8	7	7	6	6	4	4	3
Greek Language and Literature				4	4	4	4	3
Foreign Language . . . . .		3	4	4	4			
History and Geography . . . . .	5	5	4	3	3			
History . . . . .						3	3	3
Philosophy and Political Economy . . . . .						3	3	3
Mathematics . . . . .	1	2	2	2	2			
Mathematics and Physics . . . . .						4	4	5
Nature, Chemistry, and Geography . . . . .						3	2	3
History of Art . . . . .							2	2

## SCIENCE LYCEUM

	<i>Forms</i>			
	1	2	3	4
Italian Language and Literature . . . . .	4	4	3	3
Latin Language and Literature . . . . .	4	4	4	4
Foreign Language . . . . .	4	4	3	3
History . . . . .	3	3	2	2
Philosophy and Political Economy . . . . .			4	4
Mathematics and Physics . . . . .	5	5	6	6
Nature, Chemistry, and Geography . . . . .	3	3	2	2
Drawing . . . . .	3	2	2	2

## TRAINING COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS

	<i>Forms</i>				<i>Higher Course</i>		
	<i>Lower Course</i>						
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
Italian Language and Literature . . . . .	7	4	4	4	4	5	4
Latin Language and Literature . . . . .		6	6	5	5	4	4
History and Geography . . . . .	4	3	3	2			
History . . . . .					3	4	4
Philosophy and Pedagogy . . . . .					4	5	6
Foreign Language . . . . .		4	4	4			
Mathematics . . . . .	3	2	2	3			
Mathematics and Physics . . . . .					3	4	4
Drawing . . . . .	3	2	2	2	2	1	1
Nature, Geography, and Hygiene . . . . .					3	2	3
Music and Singing . . . . .	2	2	2	2	2	1	1

## TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

*(Lower Course)*

	<i>Forms</i>			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Italian Language . . . . .	7	6	5	5
Latin Language . . . . .	7	7	6	6
Foreign Language . . . . .		4	4	4
History and Geography . . . . .	4	4	2	2
Mathematics . . . . .	2	2	4	4
Drawing . . . . .	4	2	2	2
Shorthand . . . . .			2	2

## TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

*(Higher Course: Agriculture)*

	<i>Forms</i>			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Italian Language and Literature . . . . .	5	5		
History . . . . .	5	5		
Mathematics and Physics . . . . .	6	5		
Nature and Geography . . . . .	3	3	2	
Drawing and Architecture . . . . .	4	2	7	6
Chemistry . . . . .		3	3	3
Topography . . . . .			8	8
Land Legislation . . . . .			2	
Land Valuation . . . . .				4
Agricultural Special Subjects . . . . .			4	4

## TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

*(Higher Course: Commerce and Accountancy)*

	<i>Forms</i>			
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Italian Language and Literature . . . . .	5	5		
History . . . . .	5	5		
Mathematics and Physics . . . . .	6	5		
Nature and Geography . . . . .	3	2	3	2
Book-keeping . . . . .			9	8
Law . . . . .			7	5
Political Economy . . . . .			2	4
Finance and Statistics . . . . .				4
First Foreign Language . . . . .	2	2		
Second Foreign Language . . . . .		5	5	4
Handwriting . . . . .	2			
Chemistry . . . . .		3		

These time-tables were rigid; almost as rigid was the system of homework and interrogation at school. The student had his time divided between the three to five hours of school attendance,

and the hours for homework. From (say) 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. he had four lessons of fifty-five minutes, during which he had to sit continuously in his place, listening to the teacher or expecting to be questioned and classified for every question. The test of what he was doing at home was often a nightmare to him, because the marks he received one day might influence the final result for that year, and his promotion to the upper form. Every term the *pagella* (the report) had to be filled with one figure for each subject, which must be the result of several questions; the teacher was expected to keep a detailed record of all these questions in his class-book, which could be examined by the headmaster or higher authorities, and which must agree with the marks given at the end of the term and year. The final report for the year could not diverge very far from the terminal reports; in spite of all words used in the 'Directions' and in many circular letters that assessment of the proficiency of pupils must not be bound up with any kind of arithmetical alchemy, the system of classifications, interrogations, etc., ensured that the preoccupation of pupils with this day-to-day test and the routine work of the teachers in this formal side of school life continued to have the same sterilizing effect as they used to have before the reform. To this was added the dread of the final examinations.

It is true that the expectation of being examined by persons other than one's own teachers gave a greater sense of individual responsibility. Especially in the last stages of the secondary school the students felt that they were preparing for the final test on their own efforts, and that their teachers were a guide, but not more. They might even induce their teachers to dwell more at length on some parts of the syllabus than on others, because they felt that they needed more help there than anywhere else. The 'common work', the collaboration between teacher and student, which represented one of the ideals of the new pedagogy, was partly achieved, not always in a friendly way, in the last year of the secondary schools. The effort of revising the whole work done in three or more years had a stimulating effect and gave to many young people the sense that they had really acquired some valuable possession at school. But this positive element was counterbalanced, and more than counterbalanced, by the terror of the examinations. Failure in one subject meant failure in all; it meant that one year was lost, that next year the pupil had to pass all the tests again. The principle that the teachers and examiners must give a cumulative judgement, and that deficiencies in one subject must not be decisive if proficiency was shown in others, was not easily applied. Every teacher and examiner was naturally jealous of his colleagues as



regards the importance of his own subject. It was difficult to persuade the teacher of Latin that if a candidate was completely ignorant of that language he might prove a perfect mathematician or medical practitioner. On the other hand, if the examiner in mathematics held the view that without elementary trigonometry it was not possible to enter the Faculty of Letters at the university nobody could stop him from forcing the candidate to sit again next year for the whole set of examinations. The students, therefore, were inclined to see the approaching test as a *redde rationem*, for which they must be sure to know as much of all and every subject included in the curriculum as they can expect to be judged sufficient by the several examiners. No choice was allowed for a preference among subjects. Apart from the mildness of the examiners, there was no way of having a special gift for one subject accepted as a justification for neglecting another. The insistence on 'general culture' and on 'understanding rather than encyclopedic knowledge' was not altogether empty; but it was very far from meaning all that it purported to mean. The candidate consulted the examination syllabuses faithfully and felt he must make sure that he knew as many things as possible among those listed in them. As can be seen from the instances we have quoted, the lists were not short nor lacking in detail.

The intellectual 'freedom' which the reformers claimed to be giving young people was not much greater than it used to be. The students felt, however, at least in many instances, that the choice of this or that classic independently of the will of the teachers, the possibility of studying so many different outlooks in philosophers of the past and present and, perhaps, of choosing one or the other as the *maestro*, and the new kind of essays in which they could express their personal taste, gave them more liberty in a school in which intellectual and social liberty was very restricted. The stress put on general ideas as opposed to a lengthy study of dates, names, and details was considered by the more intelligent as a very welcome change. Students at private schools found themselves in a much better position than before. The fact that their colleagues from the State schools were losing the privilege of being finally examined by their own teachers, and that all were unknown to the examiners, gave them the feeling of greater justice and a better chance of a fair competition. At the beginning there was a general impression that studies were becoming more difficult and serious, mainly on account of the examinations; soon, however, the general attitude towards school went back very much to what it was. Apart from the small minority who had a special liking for learning and intellectual

effort, the great problem remained that of how to pass from one form into the other, and to get out of school into 'independent' life.

The teachers had to adapt themselves in many ways to the new system. Their habits were affected not only by the new curricula and system of examinations, but by the methods which they were supposed to follow, and in many cases by the subjects they were being forced to teach. This last point was for a long time a very sore one. The principles of the idealistic philosophy, and especially of Gentile's own theory, had suggested the need for a unification of the teaching of history and philosophy in the Classical and Science Lyceums. Whatever reasons this unification might have in Gentile's mind, and whatever possibility there might be of training new teachers to 'unify' their outlook on historical facts and philosophical problems, it was beyond doubt in 1923, and is so now, that the teachers who are interested in and capable of teaching philosophy find it difficult, to say the least, to teach history; and *vice versa*. Another coupling of subjects which was imposed upon teachers was that of mathematics and physics. Teachers who had taught only mathematics or experimental physics for ten, twenty, or thirty years, were suddenly forced to teach both subjects, because, in the mind of Gentile, both being 'particular sciences', connected by some common methods of abstraction and deduction, there was no reason to keep them separated. These are two of the most striking examples, but not the only ones, of the effects of philosophical theory on educational practice. Many teachers had neither the desire nor the possibility of changing over efficiently to the new system, and the effect on the students was not good.

The new examination system affected all teachers in all schools. Their work was led to new lines by this new preoccupation and responsibility. Before the reform the individual teacher had to follow year by year the syllabuses set for him by the central authority. But there was not much control over his detailed fidelity to the directives coming from Rome. From time to time, especially if there were serious suspicions of dishonesty or incapacity, an inspector might see how the regulations were carried out. But on the whole the teacher was the only judge of his teaching; the pupils were promoted according to the teachers' views of their proficiency, in relation to what they, the teachers, had taught. The new system might have meant a very serious check on what the teachers did. The freedom they were allowed was in many ways only apparent. It was true that the syllabuses were not programmes of teaching; that they suggested what the student might be expected to know at the end of one course of his

studies; and the teachers were at liberty to reach those results in whatever ways they choose. They were able, if they so desired, to decide what parts of the syllabus must be done in one year, and what in the others. But in reality the teachers felt that they must prepare the pupils for the last 'trial'. There could hardly be any justification for the teacher who had not developed sufficiently one part of the syllabus. The examination of the students was an examination of the teachers. This very fact brought about, especially in the last stages of every course, a kind of solidarity between students and teachers. The interest of the teachers in the success of the students was very often a pleasant characteristic in the relations between the two parties after the reform. The students felt much more at ease in asking for help, and the teacher was much more ready to give it.

The effect of the new regulations on teachers and pupils has been much greater in the elementary schools. The curricula were not fixed in detail; and the period of time before a first important test was long enough (five years) for a more elastic adaptation of teaching to the needs of the examinations. The changes in the curriculum itself were on the whole much more fundamental than in the secondary schools, and the children from six to eleven had something completely new which was absent from the schools of their older colleagues. Religion, free design, music, and writing of a diary brought broader and more varied interests. The teachers were being trained in a totally different way, since the *Istituto Magistrale* had been brought much nearer than it used to be to the humanistic schools. The older teachers may have found it difficult to adapt themselves to these new systems; and they have found that the lack of training in actual teaching was harmful to the young teachers who began work without ever having previously faced a class of children. The younger ones felt they had a richer acquaintance with the 'big problems of life' which advantageously counterbalanced their deficiencies in child-psychology and pedagogic rules. The freedom of elementary teachers was, however, very much restricted by the headmasters, inspectors, and 'Supervisors' who had more power than they used to have, not only in the administration of the schools, but in education itself. Many of these took the initiative in transforming *de facto* the elementary schools in accordance with the new laws.

In the universities the students, especially in such Faculties as *Belles Lettres* and Philosophy, very soon enjoyed the advantages of freedom in their choice of subjects. The situation was not the same in all universities, since the fundamental principle of the reform was, as we have seen, that each university was a body free

to give itself didactic rules. On the whole the principle was accepted that, apart from a few indispensable subjects, the student could choose the course he wanted to take. This short-lived rule was, from the point of view of the students, the main characteristic of the reform. The fact that after the close of his university career the student had to pass one further examination necessary to qualify for one or other of the professions, did not affect the university life of the student in the same way as the State examination had affected him in the secondary schools. He started thinking of it after the *laurea*. One beneficial effect of the *libertà universitaria*, of which many of the best students took advantage, was the multiplication of special courses, institutes, and seminars for the specialization of studies; which, while not affecting very much their career as students, gave them more opportunity of preparing for a career as men of science and scholars.

The professors acquired a more independent teaching position. The statutes for each university were drawn up after the professors had been consulted, and the suggestion for institutes, courses, and curricula were the work to which each of them contributed. The distribution of funds was much more influenced by their wishes than it had been in the past fifty years; and in this way the teaching help given to students by the professors could be, and very often was, much greater than it could otherwise have been. On the whole, however, the education given and received in the universities was not radically transformed. The relations between students and professors, private teachers, *incaricati*, and assistants did not undergo great changes. The students went to lectures whenever they wanted, there being little check on their attendance; they did not have much to do personally with their professors, but, where there were any, with the assistants. The great number of examinations were the main problem for the large majority of students. The character of an institution, meant half for scientific purposes and half for the preparation of professional men and women, was still the principal mark of the Italian universities. Nor was there any appreciable change in the kind of subjects that were taught or in the methods of teaching. The very principle of 'freedom', while opening the door to the development of new doctrines and methods, left very much at work the forces that tended to keep alive the traditions and legacy of the past.

## Chapter Six

### REFORMS IN THE ADMINISTRATION

IT has been said that the reform of the school has been one episode in the total reform of administration in Italy. This is true of some aspects of the transformation, and it is from this point of view that the legislation was more characteristically Fascist. The law of 3 December 1922 granting full powers to the coalition Government headed by Mussolini was meant to meet the need of 'reorganizing and simplifying the system of taxes, adapting it to the needs of the State budget, distributing the burdens fairly, simplifying the work of departments in order to save time, reducing expenses, and reorganizing the whole administration' (Art. 1). The interpretation given to these words was the widest possible, otherwise it would have been difficult to reform the school system in the direction desired by Gentile; they were applied literally to a few things in which the new educational organization might seem to fit into the plan of reducing expenses and bureaucracy.

The decree of 21 December 1922 provided the Ministers with the right of cutting down the number of officials, and that of 28 January 1923 ordered a revision of all appointments made since the beginning of the war (May 1915). Another decree, 27 May 1923, extended the same provisions to the local authorities, on which elementary schools depended. By these orders it became possible to discharge all persons of sixty-five and older, those who had served for forty years or more, whatever their age, and those who proved inefficient on account of health or for any other reason. These principles were applied to all grades. Of the five highest officials of the Ministry, the Directors General, three were relieved of their posts, and so were about twenty Directors, more than fifty Superiors of Studies, hundreds of Inspectors, and many hundreds of teachers and headmasters (*Direttori* and *Presidi*). The highest advisory body, the Supreme Council (*Consiglio Superiore*), was completely recast, so that it might cope with the enormous problem of the reform of the schools. This revision of appointments aimed both at reducing expenses and at efficiency.

The reduction of posts and personnel was in some cases very drastic. The Inspectors of secondary schools were reduced from 37 to 3; the Directors of the several ministerial divisions from

37 to 21; and the personnel of the Supreme Council, whose number had already been cut from 32 to 28, were further reduced to 21, the same number as in the *Lex Casati*. The Supervisors of Studies were 73, i.e., one for each province (county); only 19 were left, i.e., one for each 'region' or 'department'. Each of these offices had a number of subordinate officials, whose posts naturally disappeared, so that the economy in the administration of education was considerable. Further economy was effected by the reduction in the number of secondary schools, especially of Normal Schools (the new *Istituti Magistrali*), and in the number of teachers of certain subjects. Teachers who used to work as little as six hours a week were forced to teach additional subjects or the same subject in several schools.

Some of the discharged officials and teachers were moved to other posts of lesser importance or responsibility. Many Supervisors of Studies were sent back either to teach or to direct schools; others were made secretaries of the new and more important Supervisors. Many headmasters who had shown inability in their office returned to their old teaching posts. Painful as this 'purge' has been, it was accepted on the whole as fair. The impression was given that, apart from some of the highest officials, the ideology of individuals did not influence the decisions of the Minister. The reasons for the discharges were published in the official Bulletin of the Ministry; no such reasons as 'political unreliability', which became frequent in later years, were taken into account.

The principles of authority and hierarchy were applied in ways quite new to the school administration. The responsibility attached to the office of the Minister became greater than before, because the final decision on matters with which all dependent offices were concerned remained with him. Particularly important was his power of appointing special inspectors, chosen from whatever quarters he liked, to make direct inquiries into the functioning of schools and the efficiency of individual teachers, and to refer to him for action to be taken. In fact the office of inspector of secondary schools was practically changed from being one of routine check on the normal life of schools into one of a *longa manus* of the Minister. Another step of the greatest importance in this connexion was the transformation of the Supervisors of Studies. It had been long advocated that administration should be decentralized. It appeared, however, impossible to go as far as allowing the 73 Supervisors much freedom in school questions. The reduction in their number meant that it was easier to find capable persons to lead them,

and to give each of them a sufficiently specialized personnel to meet the several needs of a local administration of schools. The 19 Supervisors who were left took the place of the Ministry of Education in many aspects of the administration of education. All problems of a more local character, the institution of new schools, decisions regarding private schools, and the choice and appointment of elementary-school teachers were left to the Supervisors. The influence of the Supervisor of Studies became much greater than it had ever been. In fact he had been till 1923 nothing more than an official who had to do some very well defined routine work, but without any real initiative or authority over the schools. Since 1923 the Supervisor was in many respects the head of the schools of the region. The headmasters and teachers received directives of a pedagogic character, and soon of a political character as well, from this regional head. He could inspect schools, and had a *de facto* power of advising the personnel to follow this or that line of action. Most Supervisors started publishing bulletins and periodicals, which gradually took the place of other non-official publications on the desks of teachers. The elementary-school teachers especially were urged to subscribe to these periodicals, and to consider them almost as the voice of the State. Many Supervisors went as far as organizing meetings and congresses in which they had the part of political and educational leaders, and setting up some kind of holiday boarding-houses for new teachers to live in the 'proper atmosphere'. Although the name remained the same as that of the old officials, it can be said that the Supervisor of Studies was something completely new, a pedagogic adviser and an authoritative leader, listened to, or feared, by both teachers and headmasters.

The power of headmasters too was increased. As the Supervisors, so the headmasters used to have very little say in educational matters till the *Riforma* required that they should have a part in directing the teachers and in seeing that the new 'spirit' should prevail against tradition and laziness. The fact that headmasters were to be members of the commissions for State examinations and chairmen of all internal examination commissions in their own schools with the power of examining in one or more subjects, gave them an authority which formerly had belonged only to actual teachers. On the other hand, the fact that the students were, in the end, examined by a commission coming from outside, and including a headmaster, spurred the headmasters and teachers to take the preparation of the pupils of their schools much more seriously; it was in a way their responsibility if the results were good or bad. The relations between headmasters and pupils

were in the past restricted to heavier punishments or to justifications of absence from school. After the reform they became in many instances the advisers and protectors at least of those who were going to pass the final examinations. It was not rare to see last-year students complaining to the headmaster that a teacher was not preparing them adequately for the coming examination.

The principle of hierarchy was thus emphasized in the attributions of the officials. The authority of headmasters over teachers, of Supervisors over headmasters and teachers, and of the Minister over all of them was a fact, and not merely, as frequently happens in public administration, an empty right. The same principle was made more noticeable and universal in the decree on the 'hierarchical organization of all State administration', of 11 November 1923. By this decree all State officials and employees were classified according to grades, in exactly the same way as military personnel. In fact both military personnel and civilians were put by that decree in the same scheme, and it became usual for civilian officials, including teachers, to consider their careers in terms of promotion from the grade of lieutenant to that of captain, major, and so on. This became even more apparent when all officials were urged to wear a badge showing their grades, which reproduced exactly the grades shown on the caps of officers.

The counterpart of the 'teaching freedom' was a stricter tie which bound the teachers to the State. Their quality as State officials was emphasized through the oath of allegiance to the King and laws: 'I swear to be faithful to the King and his royal successors; I will observe loyally the Statute and laws of the State; I will fulfil all the duties of my office diligently and zealously in the interest of the common weal and of the administration; I will keep the secrets of my office, and behave even in my private life according to the dignity of my public duties. I swear that I do not and never will belong to any association or party having activities which are not in accord with the duties of my office. I swear that I will fulfil my duties aiming solely at the inseparable happiness of the King and country.'

The reform of education aimed, among other things, at spurring private enterprise to compete with the State in promoting culture. The State schools were intended to be the models, fewer in number than they were in the past, and attended by fewer pupils. Even within the framework of the State schools it was possible to allow for more independent initiative, at least in the universities. The reform of administration in these institutions met in most details the desires expressed in the Report of the Royal Commission published in 1914. Side by side with



teaching autonomy, the universities were given the right of freely administering their incomes; and the administrative board of each university could include members appointed by all institutions (local authorities, banks, industries), contributing to it. It was this board that controlled the expenses and could develop the universities in one direction or the other. The head of the university, the Rector, appointed by royal decree, and the deans of the Faculties, appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Rectors, were not necessarily powerful unless they overstepped their rights, trusting in the support of the State. Their influence was, however, greater on the teaching side, as it was the Academic Senate, of which they were the members, which prepared the university statute to be approved by the Ministry. Very few limitations were put by law to the power of shaping individual universities in any form the Academic Senate might want; but more serious limitations could come from the administrative board ('Council of Administration') that controlled the finances.

The universities were divided into three groups, A, B, and C, according to their importance and the extent to which they were controlled by the State. The 'A' universities (Bologna, Cagliari, Genoa, Naples, Padua, Pavia, Pisa, Rome, and Turin) were maintained chiefly by the State, and had all the Faculties and main *scuole*. The 'B' universities (Macerata, Messina, Milan, Modena, Parma, Sassari, and Sienna; the newly-founded university of Bari, and that of Florence resulting from the transformation of the two existing institutions of higher education; and the technical high schools of Bologna, Genoa, and Turin) could have less faculties and were supported mainly by local bodies, the State giving only a little help. The 'C' universities (Camerino, Ferrara, Perugia, and Urbino; and the Commercial University *Bocconi* in Milan) were completely independent; but the State could suppress them if the means at their disposal were insufficient for their upkeep. The real aim of this classification was to recognize the validity of studies done in independent universities, so that local or private initiative might be encouraged to set up institutes of higher education in competition with the State. It was as a consequence of this provision that the Catholic university of Milan, founded in 1921, was recognized in 1925 as having the same rights as the other universities. Similarly the other new university of Milan was founded on the initiative of the commune and powerful local bodies. Milan was thus the example, the only one so far, of what the liberal-minded reformers wanted to see happening in the realm of higher education. There was not only competition in scientific research, to which the Catholic

university contributed with very modern laboratories, especially for experimental psychology; but the Catholic university strove to become a powerful centre of ideas; the many publications, periodical and others, issued by it testified to a vast activity aiming at a revision of culture in a Catholic direction. In addition, the training of teachers for secondary schools was given much more attention than in the other universities, so that the graduates of the Sacred Heart often found themselves in a better position to win the competitions for posts in secondary schools.

This encouragement given to private initiative was not restricted to the universities, for which it would anyway be difficult to find sufficient funds otherwise than in the State treasury. The elementary schools had already known two kinds of private institutions, i.e., the religious schools and those for the most backward and inaccessible parts of the country. The main organization of this latter group was the *Opera contro l'analfabetismo* (which took the place, in 1921, of the *Ente contro l'analfabetismo*, set up in 1919 and abolished in 1921). According to the decree of 31 October 1923, the elementary schools were divided into Classified and Non-classified Schools. The classified schools were to depend normally on the governments (central or local); they were the schools which could be attended by at least forty children. The non-classified were those which existed or might be set up wherever needed for any number of children bound to go to school, unless they were enough for a classified school to be set up for them. The non-classified schools were to depend on private organizations, of which the most important were the *Umanitaria*, the *Scuole dell'Agro Romano*, and the *Consortium*. Later on other organizations were set up having the same aim; each of them had allotted for its work one part of Italy.

In the secondary field, the main encouragement to the foundation of new private schools came from the State examination. The fact that pupils of State schools had no better chance of gaining their certificates made families less shy of sending their children to private schools. Besides, the number of pupils in every class in the State schools had to be strictly limited to 35, and no new classes were to be set up. Many children therefore could not find a place in the State schools; and it was urgent that private schools should accept them. A special reason for founding new private Training Colleges for Teachers was the drastic reduction in the number of these schools. Of about 140 Normal Schools in existence before 1923, only 83 were left after the reform. The need for more Training Colleges was met mainly by religious orders. Many schools of this type were set

up by nuns, and could soon compete with the State schools and be attended by thousands of girls.

The reform in administration aimed at greater efficiency in the State schools and at allowing and encouraging private initiative. It is difficult to say whether the first object could have been reached by the decrees of 1923, because the later years saw such a number of changes that the experiment did not last long enough to give final results. The second object was successful, at least in part, although it was hardly in the mind of the reformers that the only 'private' initiative achieving something in secondary and higher education should have been the Church. One effect of this part of the reform was the sense of the great power of the State and of the hierarchy. The students realized more than they had ever done that it was by the State that all their qualifications were granted; in the phrase *esame di stato* it was not only the first word that remained impressed in their minds. The teachers felt that they were controlled by their headmasters, the *presidi* by the Supervisors, and all of them by the Ministerial Inspectors and the Minister. This emphasis on the State led eventually to something quite different from what the reformers had in mind, because it defeated that purpose of intellectual freedom which was at the root of the call for transformation in education.

## Chapter Seven

### REFORMING THE REFORM

THE new laws on education were applied immediately. A few adaptations were necessary in the earliest years to make the change-over possible; but they were restricted to a minimum. It was preferred that the schools should suffer for a few years rather than that, as had happened so often, reform should be delayed. For the same reason much sensible criticism was disregarded; thanks to the full powers it was not necessary to pay excessive regard to the two Chambers of Parliament. On the whole, however, the reactions were favourable. This did not mean either that the new educational system would remain unchanged, or that the new 'spirit' would triumph. The Fascist claim that the new régime was one of perpetual revolution was only too true in the schools, if one thinks of perpetual instability rather than of profound transformation. This character of instability was not new to Italian life; in fact it was for many of its faults that Fascism meant to find a remedy. The Ministers of Education went on changing much as before; and it did not matter a great deal if, instead of speaking of ministerial crisis, as was the habit in 'democratic' times, one started speaking of *rotazione*, and of training different persons for the highest responsibilities. Men from different quarters succeeded each other in Gentile's place: Alessandro Casati (1924-25), Pietro Fedele (1925-27), Balbino Giuliano (1927-29), Giuseppe Belluzzo (1929-31), Francesco Ercole (1931-34), Cesare Maria De Vecchi (1934-36), Giuseppe Bottai (1936-43), and finally A. Biggini for the last few months of Fascist rule. All of them left some documents of their will to 'adapt the schools to the new climate'; and this might mean either a further extension of the reform, or 'retouchings' to this or that point of Gentile's system.

Three different aspects can be considered in this perpetual 'adaptation' of the schools; they are not clearly defined in terms of time, and not always distinguished from each other. In the first place come those developments of the reform which were due to a natural desire to complete what had been left on one side in a work of such range, and those minor changes which the ministers of the first ten years after the reform thought necessary to make Gentile's work correspond to their views or those of persons who influenced them. Under this heading there might

be included developments which, though depending on acts of the Fascist Government, are not necessarily bound up with any point of the Fascist doctrine; for example, the introduction of religious instruction in secondary schools following the Concordat of 1929. Another aspect is the growth of the Fascist world round the schools and its influence inside them, both by way of State action leading the schools more and more into the framework of the Fascist doctrine and Party, and by way of pressure from outside on teachers and pupils. The third aspect is that of an attempt to give a 'unitarian' education, in which either the State gives a Fascist character through and through to education, or the Fascist organizations replace what is left of the old State and, breaking completely with the past, build a totally new system with a new 'spirit'. For these three reasons much that Gentile had done was demolished.

The building up of a Fascist education outside and inside the schools will be treated in other chapters. Here a few facts will be given about those provisions which led to alterations in the school system more or less independently of the new ideology. One cannot go into details of what was called by Gentile and his supporters the *cancrena* (gangrene) *dei ritocchi*. In 1927 the Lyceums for Girls were abolished. They had proved a failure, since less than two hundred girls in the whole of Italy had enrolled in these schools. Almost every year from 1924 the timetables for secondary schools were changed in this or that detail, one period being added for a subject in one form and taken away from another form, or a subject being started in one form instead of in another. The commissions for State examinations which had to include two university professors according to Gentile's law were to have only one after 1927. Admission to post-elementary schools required an easier examination than admission to 'Gymnasiums' and Training Colleges till a decree of 1929 ordered all examinations for admission to these schools to be equal. One of the main points of Gentile's reform was that State schools should have fewer pupils; that classes should consist of no more than thirty-five pupils, and that no new classes should be set up in the several schools. The limit of thirty-five pupils was lifted almost immediately. In 1926 provisions were made for new classes (*corsi paralleli, classi aggiunte*) to be set up in special cases; and very soon the old practice of multiplying the classes for the same form, without permanent teachers, was renewed in full. The number of pupils, which had decreased in secondary schools by about 20 per cent between 1923 and 1926, went up again, and very soon was much larger than it had ever been in the past. Even the teaching freedom

of the university was restricted in 1932, when certain examinations were declared compulsory for students of this or that Faculty.

One feature which often disturbed the normal work of teachers was the frequent changes in syllabuses. Between 1926 and 1933 the syllabuses for secondary schools were changed three times; and this before the bigger changes were introduced by De Vecchi in 1935. The alterations were not of great importance, individually, but they forced the teachers every second or third year to change some points in their plans. Educational books had to be adapted to the new requirements; and since it is not so easy to force all pupils to provide themselves with the latest editions, there arose a new source of disorder. On some points the changes were quite important, as when the study of the whole history of philosophy was made compulsory, instead of an historical introduction to the few authors whose works were studied in detail. The special likings of the Ministers were apparent in some orders directly affecting teaching, as when Fedele ordered that economic facts should be more prominent than they were in the study of history. This was not the only point in which the very 'spirit' of Gentile's reform was attacked; Fedele came from circles opposed to philosophical idealism, and tried to stop the triumph of Gentile's philosophy in the schools.

Religious instruction had a very definite character in Gentile's plan; it should be nothing more than a preparation of the children's minds for the higher philosophical speculation they would practise at a later age. The ideas of dogmas, ritual, and permanent, eternal institutions ought to disappear as soon as the child developed his intelligence and realized the nature of the human spirit. Its appearance in secondary schools was a hard blow to the 'idealists'; not only this, but it broke with the idea of a lay school much more than Gentile had done by introducing religion in the elementary schools. Courses of religion had been set up in many schools from 1925 onwards. They were completely free, and were organized in the framework of many other courses (shorthand, typing, music, etc.) that schools were allowed to set up for pupils who wanted to attend them in extra hours. After the Concordat of 1929 the State had to provide for religious instruction in all secondary schools, on a half-compulsory basis, only those pupils being exempted whose parents had good reasons to refuse to send them to these classes. It is as yet too early to judge what the effect of this 'new subject' was on education. For several years the teacher of religion had his influence impaired by the fact that students not proficient in religious subjects and unwilling to take their religious classes

seriously were not prevented from passing to the upper forms or from obtaining their certificates. But the mere fact of the presence of priests in schools, and of a definite doctrine being taught side by side with the many histories and philosophies, aroused at least a great interest in religious matters among young people who would otherwise have been kept in total ignorance of them. In many schools the priest—the teacher of religion—easily became the moral director of the students. That collaboration between Church and schools which had been stopped at the beginning of the Italian kingdom, and had been dreaded as signifying an intrusion of an illiberal power into secular liberty, started again in 1929. The authority of the religious teacher became much greater in 1935, when proficiency in religious instruction became necessary for promotion from form to form. The influence of the new relations between the State and the Church was felt also outside the teaching of religion itself. It was recommended to teachers of philosophy that they should be careful to avoid arousing doubt on religious questions in the students' minds. Some authors who are considered harmful to a good moral and religious education were banned from some schools. It may well be that this part taken by religion and the Church will be the only new element brought into the schools in Fascist times which will remain as a decisive factor in the future of Italian education.

The progress in the reorganization of schools on lines more or less consistent with the reform of 1923 was marked mainly by the decrees concerning post-elementary education. Although the reform of 1923 had provided for it in the *Scuole Complementari* and the *Corsi di Avviamento al Lavoro* annexed to elementary schools, these proved quite unsatisfactory. The *Scuole Complementari* had a character too uniform to meet the needs of the different parts of the country and sections of the population; the *Corsi di Avviamento* had not been organized according to any plan; and apart from these two kinds of schools, there remained a great number of professional schools for children, under the control of the Minister of National Economy, or of local authorities. A decree issued in 1928 provided for a greater co-ordination between all these schools, and another in March 1929 provided for their co-ordination with the schools of other types. One of the grievances against the *Scuole Complementari* and similar schools was that children whose parents had decided that they should enter this type of school were deprived of any possibility of continuing their studies in higher schools, even if they proved specially gifted. This second decree provided special measures and instituted special intermediate courses so that it was possible

to pass into the 'Gymnasium', Technical Institute, and Training College, even from the *Scuole Complementari*. But these decrees, while aiming at co-ordination, added to the complication of the system. In the autumn of 1930 the whole matter was taken in hand and a new organization was given to all the schools for children between eleven and fifteen not attending secondary schools. All the *Scuole Complementari*, the *Corsi di Avviamento al Lavoro*, and the special professional schools were brought into one scheme, the *Scuole e Corsi di Avviamento Professionale*. The variety needed by differences between the different parts of the country, local industries, trades, agriculture, fishing, etc., was fixed by law in a dozen specialized kinds of *Scuole di Avviamento*. The syllabuses for fundamental subjects were to be applied to all schools, the teachers chosen in the same way, and it became possible for any child to pass from those schools to others provided he or she had passed certain examinations.

The same policy of giving a new and stable order to schools was followed with regard to schools of art. One decree had already been published on this subject by Gentile at the end of 1923. In 1926 art schools were reorganized more completely. The Art Lyceums were founded, and provided the specialized culture needed by young people between fifteen and twenty who intended to become painters, sculptors, and architects, together with that general culture which is given in other secondary schools, so that artists might receive a humanistic and scientific education which in the past they did not have in any school. The Higher Schools of Architecture founded in Venice, Florence, and Rome were meant to develop the artistic taste in architecture which could not well be developed in the Schools of Engineering already existing, because these aimed mainly at training graduated engineers.

The encouragement given by Gentile to private ventures in private schools, and especially secondary schools, was continued and embodied in new decrees. Already there had long existed private schools which were recognized by the State as having the same standard as public schools. The *Scuole Pareggiate*, although managed by local authority or private bodies, were subject to all rules applicable to State schools, and were allowed all the rights enjoyed by the latter. The State had of course the right of inspection, and the *pareggiamento* could have been withdrawn if the results of the inspections were unfavourable. This privilege of the *pareggiamento* could, however, hardly encourage the institution of new schools by private enterprise, because the acceptance of all rules and burdens of a State school was required; above all fees and wages had to be the same as those paid in the State



schools; and this meant a great expenditure and no hope of profit. In 1925 a new kind of recognition was allowed to schools which proved satisfactory, namely, the *parificazione*. This meant that, under certain conditions, pupils who had studied for some years in the *Scuole Parificate* were permitted to continue their studies in State schools or in *Scuole Pareggiate*. The *Scuole Parificate* were allowed freedom in financial matters, and a large amount of freedom in the arrangement of classes and courses. The consequence of these measures was a large increase in private schools, and, more than this, a race to improve the standard of those already in existence, in order that the privilege could be granted and the number of pupils consequently increased.

While these developments were partly following the new lines of the *Riforma Gentile*, other developments continued very much on the lines followed for more than sixty years. The fight against total illiteracy never stopped, nor did the improvements in buildings and in the hygienic conditions of elementary and higher schools. The number of schools, especially in small villages or isolated localities, increased by many thousands in the first ten years after the war. The semi-private institutions to which the non-classified schools were entrusted grew to the number of ten, so that the whole peninsula and islands were helped by these pioneers in the extirpation of illiteracy. Although it is difficult to deduce from the many figures published in official publications what the results of this eighty-year struggle were, it is certain that the aim of having practically no illiterates among the young generation has been almost achieved. Decrees making instruction compulsory also for the deaf and dumb helped towards this end.

One trend in the development of educational policy in the first years after Gentile needs to be emphasized, that of the progressive centralization of all educational institutions. This was at the bottom of the *Lex Casati*; it was always in the background or in the foreground in the subsequent evolution of education. In Gentile's reform it was very strongly present, although on the other hand freedom and private initiative were asserted and encouraged. It gradually became the central idea in Fascist policy towards education, and so became identified with totalitarianism. The elementary schools were still partly dependent on the local authorities, according to the law of 1911. From 1928 onwards 'autonomy' as regards schools was withdrawn from a great number of communes; and in 1933 all elementary schools were finally put under the direct control of the State. Many of the Technical Institutes had a certain amount of independence on account of their connexion with local bodies,

which were interested in and contributed to their functioning. The Ministry of National Economy, on which they depended, was far less strict in its rules than the Ministry of Education.

In 1928 these schools were passed over to the Ministry of Education; in 1929 there were instituted under the supervision of the Minister the *Consorti provinciali per l'Istruzione tecnica*, i.e., bodies to advise on all measures to be taken in connexion with technical and professional education. In 1931 a complete reorganization of the Technical Institutes took place, which brought into them much more uniformity. Finally in 1932 the National Council (*Giunta*) for Higher Technical Instruction was set up in Rome; its task was to co-ordinate technical and professional education with the needs of national life. Almost at the same time the higher schools of university standard still controlled by the Ministry of National Economy were also handed over to the Ministry of Education.

While educational policy was thus moving towards centralization, in ways seemingly independent of the Fascist Party and doctrine, new *motifs* of education were developing outside the schools and pressure was brought to bear on them so that they might be transformed according to Fascist ideals.

### III. 'FASCISTIZATION'

#### *Chapter One*

#### THE FASCIST DOCTRINE

GENTILE'S claim that his work as an educational reformer was governed by Fascist ideals, a claim which he consistently maintained for twenty years, was not accepted by most of the political heads of Fascism. At least, they felt that the reforms themselves were not enough to transform the mind and habits of the Italian people. The call for a 'Fascistization' of the school and youth was repeated without interruption till the end of 1936. While Gentile's outlook and aims were broadly defined, and had been the outcome of a long process of discussions and experiments, the Fascist leaders frankly confessed that they had no definite doctrine to apply. Nevertheless, when they started 'Fascistization', they had in mind something which was sure to be defined, however vague this definition was bound to be for some years.

Among the various attempts to clarify 'Fascist doctrine' with an eye to its influence on education, what Mussolini wrote on this subject should be the most illuminating; it is, however, necessary to supplement it from other sources, and especially from the very unscientific material provided by propaganda, because not much of what has determined the activities of the Party, and not many of the imperialistic ideas of the past decade, have found expression in theoretical writings.

Mussolini, who avowedly disliked theory, was tempted to put his name to an article on *La Dottrina del Fascismo* for the *Enciclopedia Italiana*; reprinted in many forms and editions, this article became the classic text on the subject, and from 1936 was read and studied in most secondary schools as the final word in the history of philosophy. The article is divided into two sections: (a) 'Fundamental Ideas' and (b) 'Political and Social Doctrine'. The first part is written in a style very reminiscent of Gentile's writings, as are the views expressed in it; and those who were closest to the 'philosopher of Fascism' in his capacity as general editor of the *Enciclopedia Italiana* are sure that no mistake has been made in attributing this section to him. It is not possible to say who was the actual writer of the second part; in any case, Mussolini gave the authority of his name to the whole article, making it the authentic doctrine of the régime.

The main points of the *Dottrina del Fascismo* are these:

(1) 'Fascism, being built on a solid doctrine, is at the same time action (*prassi*) and thought; action enshrines a doctrine, which in its turn grows out of a system of historical forces with which it is strictly bound together'; these temporal contingencies, however, are supplemented by a conception of what is eternal and universal; there is a conception of life without which Fascism cannot be understood.

(2) The world is not the material mass of appearance; it is a spiritual reality in which man is not an individual severed from all his fellows, pursuing his own pleasure according to his natural instinct. 'Man is an individual in as much as he is a nation [*sic*], a fatherland, and represents or indeed is himself a moral law binding together the individuals and the generations into a tradition, in view of a mission to be accomplished . . . ; the individual must bring about this existing reality in which, and in which only, he has a value as a human being; self-denial, sacrifice of one's own particular interest, and death itself are the means to the fulfilment of this duty.'

(3) Men must be active; 'all their energies must be employed in a free will if this world is to be created'. One must know the difficulties and be ready to overcome them; life is a continuous fight, for which one must be prepared physically, morally, and intellectually. Therefore education is of the greatest importance, and so is culture in all its forms, i.e., art, religion, and science; while work is the means by which man must conquer nature and create his own world. That is why Fascist doctrine has an ethical character: the duty of realizing the human world through toil and struggle cannot be avoided.

(4) It is not, however, a question of morals only: 'Fascism is a religious point of view; man is seen in his immanent relation to a superior law; and this law is an objective Will, transcending individuals and lifting them to the stage in which they realize that they are members of a "spiritual" society.' Fascism, however, does not claim to offer a solution to *the* problem of life or to give happiness on earth; it does not believe in the possibility of such things: 'only those problems set by history which find or suggest by themselves their own solution will be solved by Fascism'.

(5) The State is the only real being; the individual does not exist, unless he is identified with the State itself. Freedom is not the attribute of an abstract marionette opposed to the State, as Liberals believe; it is the attribute of the State and of the individual who is really such, i.e., who identifies his will with that of

the State. 'Everything being in the State, Fascism is totalitarian, and the Fascist State interprets, develops, and increases the power of the people in all the paths of life.' But just as Fascism opposes Liberalism, so is it the enemy of those forms of collectivism which array some sections of the State against other sections, whether in the Socialist or in the class way of the trade unions. Classes and trade unions are recognized as representative of various interests and economic activities which merge into the one State. Fascism is not a democracy in the sense that the people should be considered as a quantity, where the greater number has the upper hand; it is, however, the best form of democracy because it takes into consideration the quality of the people, i.e., the ideas, or better the 'Idea', it expresses and represents. 'This Idea is more powerful, in that it is more moral, coherent, and true; it does not come out consciously everywhere, in the various members of the people, but makes itself known through the will of few individuals, indeed of one individual only, the One, and strives, as an ideal, to become the conscious will of everybody.'

(6) The one will that represents a nation does not correspond to any race or geographical region, but to a *schiatte* (people) which becomes perpetual through history; the common character is one Idea, and this corresponds to the will of existence and power, or in other words, to the personality and consciousness of the mass of people. On the other hand, the nation itself is the result of the political will which has the name of State; the nation is such when it is prepared to defend its own rights, and rights are the creatures of the State. It is a fundamental character of a State that it should develop and expand.

(7) The Fascist State is a spiritual reality; it works from within the mind of the individuals to whom it gives rule and discipline; will and intelligence are both subject to this discipline, so that the men of action, science, and art are all pervaded by Fascism; it is in fact 'the soul of the soul'. 'Fascism is not only a lawgiver and founder of new institutions; it educates, and fosters the life of the spirit. It does not aim at remaking the external forms of human life, but its content, i.e., the character and faith of men. Therefore there is need for an authority which should enter the very soul of men, without finding any opposition.'

The second part of the *Dottrina del Fascismo* is bitterly polemical both against the various political ideals opposing Fascism, and against those who accuse it of lack of doctrine and originality. 'Fascism, it is true, was born without a doctrine, but now (1931), it has a very definite one.'

(8) The first article of faith is that 'perpetual peace is neither

possible nor useful to the human race; war alone brings all human energies to their highest state of tension and stamps with the seal of nobility the peoples that dare to face it'. This view is strictly connected with the other one refusing, except for accidental necessities, any kind of 'International' or League of Nations. 'Fascism refuses world-wide embracements; although it lives in the community of the civilized peoples, it looks into their eyes with a sense of vigilance and distrust.'

(9) The greatest danger to the Fascist faith seems to lie in Liberalism; Mussolini attacked it with violence and anger, perhaps because shortly before he wrote his *Dottrina* Croce's books on *The History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, and *The History of Italy from 1870 to 1915*, had scored a great success by their exaltation of the 'religion of liberty'. 'History is not a hunting-ground reserved for Liberalism and its professors,' said Mussolini, 'as if Liberalism were the final word of civilization.'

(10) Fascism is an ethical State, because it does not stop after having watched individuals, and taken notice of their achievements; it has a will and a consciousness, 'it educates the citizens and teaches them the social virtues, makes them conscious of their mission, encourages them towards unity, puts harmony into their interests according to justice, and passes down to future generations the conquests of the mind; it lifts men from the elemental life of the tribe up to the highest expression of power, the *Impero*. Fascism is identical with the will of power and empire; the latter being not only the expression of territorial, military, and mercantile might, but of a spiritual and moral strength as well.'

Other 'Doctrines of Fascism' have been written by Gentile himself, Alfredo Rocco, and persons of less fame. Gentile, in his *Origini e Dottrina del Fascismo*, tries hard to show how Fascism is the continuation of the Mazzinian tradition. Italian life, he says, after 1861 followed two different trends: the materialistic trend, most prominently represented by Giolitti, and the idealistic, i.e., Mazzinian; the former ruled almost unopposed for twenty years before the World War, and was temporarily overcome by the latter, which carried Italy into and through the war; it reappeared after the war, but was soon supplanted by Fascism, led by Mussolini, the personification of the Mazzinian tradition. Mazzini's conception of politics leaves nothing outside it; moral, religious, and political values are identical with each other; this 'totalitarian' view was taken over and revived by Fascism. A second point on which Mazzinianism and Fascism agree is the theory of interdependence between 'thought and

action'; Fascism did not need a special philosophy, because its actions were its theory; and if any formula is put forward from time to time, it does not bind the author or the Government; it is merely a practical opportunity, which may be superseded by action itself; reforms introduced at one time can be cancelled later on, if it seems opportune to do so. Keeping to given formulae would mean falling into the meshes of 'intellectualism' which Mazzini condemned.

This peculiar way of interpreting Mazzini's views perhaps gave a kind of satisfaction to Gentile himself, who became a much-followed master of verbose pseudo-philosophical compromise; it did not promote a revival of the highly unselfish dreams and almost religious apostolate of a nationalism subordinated to humanitarianism and respect for human dignity, which had provided the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of the Balillas with a heroic leaven. It is true that Gentile attempts to condemn even Nationalism and to save the glory of Liberalism: Nationalism is based on too narrow a view of human nature, and speaks in terms of biology, not of spiritual values; it extols an aristocracy of a few individuals leading the mass; while Fascism wants the whole people to speak their mind and will through the leaders or leader; in this sense, the individuals, who are thought of in too atomistic a way by Liberalism, have a definite importance and avoid the danger of slavery. Under this subtle argument, however, the Fascist 'truth' remains none the less far from guaranteeing the freedom threatened by Nationalism; Gentile again did not succeed in persuading his readers and listeners that his words corresponded to the facts, and that it was true that Nationalism and Liberalism pooled their merits and neutralized their faults in this synthesis called Fascism.

Alfredo Rocco had been one of the *doctrinaires* of Nationalism since the first days of the Nationalistic Party. Following very much on French patterns, he defined the principles and aims of this forerunner of Fascism in his *What is Nationalism and what do Nationalists want* written shortly before the first world war. After disposing of 'non-existing or out-of-date' problems, such as freedom, democracy, religion, and international collaboration, he bases his doctrine on the point that 'the national society is the only one that has serious interests to defend'. Therefore, Italy must concern herself exclusively with her own problems, which are dictated by her limited resources and immense needs. The answer to these problems can be found only in this way: (a) 'we must bring our internal production to the highest possible level', and (b) 'we must be firmly prepared and ready to expand and conquer.' And he continues: 'Let it not be objected that there are no free terri-

tories to be conquered; there have never been such territories; strong and progressive nations do not conquer free countries, but such as are occupied by decaying peoples; very many such countries exist in the world at present.' The *Teoria del Fascismo* which Rocco wrote as a Minister of Justice of the Fascist régime is nothing but a more up-to-date and detailed edition of his old writings. Imperialism, based on a life inside the nations which provides the easiest way for expansion, is the view of this jurist; dictatorship and the destruction of individual rights are necessary elements of the national life.

The more advanced views of the racialists, who were never popular among the Fascists till the German influence became predominant, did not find any representative of high cultural or political standing to defend them. Nor was the *Scuola di Mistica Fascista*, founded in Milan about 1930, more than a meagre and pitiful attempt to adorn subservience to the Duce with the charms of mysticism, absolute devotion, and ritual of words.

The Fascist syndicalist theory, *Dottrina Corporativa*, as set down in the *Carta del Lavoro* (Charter of Labour) and in innumerable writings of philosophers, economists, and politicians, has kept swinging between an extreme Socialism and an equally extreme defence of vested interests. In the form in which it became a subject for official instruction in the schools and propaganda everywhere, the fundamental principle is that every citizen is a worker, whether he administers his own or other people's property, or uses his brains or hands, whether he commands or obeys; classes are distinguished, wherever this is possible, on the basis of 'employer and employee', neither class having more right than the other to promote its own interests. The associations of both employers and employees are placed on the same footing, and whenever disagreement arises, impartial bodies decide the issue. The dominant interest, however, being that of the nation as a whole, the representative of the associations of employers and employees (*Sindacati*), together with members chosen from other circles, mainly the Fascist Party, constitute the 'Corporations', which have the power of co-ordinating all economic activities on a nation-wide basis; each 'corporation' representing one well-defined compartment of these activities. The implications of this theory are solidarity between people of all classes, and subordination of individual and sectional interests to the interests of the whole community. The 'representatives' of the different sections, groups, and classes are to be chosen, in accordance with the Fascist principles, not by the masses (although this was the idea in the Charter of Labour), but by the Fascist leaders; also in the economic field, the masses find their



'natural' expression in the leaders who personify the soul of the nation.

Fascist doctrine as expounded in writings with some philosophical pretensions, does not give, perhaps, the clearest picture of what came to be the 'Fascist doctrine' in the mind of the average man, educated or half-educated. Difficult though an inquiry of this kind must be, it is certain that the emphasis put on some point or other by propaganda had much more effect than many complicated treatises in the forming of a more or less universally accepted idea of Fascism. Songs, posters, speeches, newspaper articles, slogans, and art productions of all descriptions converged into the minds of millions of people, carrying with them the 'principles of Fascism'. If any scale of 'intensity' can be set up, it is probable that the 'Duce-motive' occupied the highest grade in it. The photograph or portrait of the 'providential man', very often in uniform, was always before the eyes of everybody, in the streets, in the papers, in offices, shops, cinemas, and schools. 'The Duce is always right' summarizes the attitude which it was expected everybody would take in judging his deeds; this watchword was thrust before the eyes of all, and hammered into the minds and hearts of millions. Next should come the 'war-motive'; students were reminded that books are only half their lives, the other half being represented by the rifle: *Libro e Moschetto* became the motto of the youth organizations. The general mood, for everybody, was to be one of violent audacity: *Meglio vivere un giorno da leone che cento anni da pecora* (Better to live one day as a lion than a hundred years as a sheep); this motto, which had a topical meaning when it was first written on the wall of a half-destroyed house during the first world war, was to keep the war atmosphere alive for everybody who saw it written on many a newly built or repainted wall of the never-peaceful Fascist Italy. The children had their own song *Il Balilla*, reminding them that they would be called to 'throw stones' at the enemy as the first bearer of that name had done two centuries before. The equation between 'citizen' and 'soldier', whether at peace or at war, though it did not come much into prominence in theory, was brought home to everybody by the organization of the Party, Militia, youth formations, and other Fascist associations; pride in wearing a uniform, being a *gerarca* or a *gregario* was to make a transformation in the character as well as in the social views of the Italians. These three points of doctrine, i.e., faith in the Duce, the will to fight, and military discipline, were summarized in the slogan which became the motto of Fascism: '*Credere, obbedire, combattere*' (Believe, obey, fight).

A further 'source' of Fascist doctrine and theory of life is constituted by the rules, official or unofficial, trying to enforce a so-called *stile fascista*. The phrase itself was very much used; the thing was very vague. It was in the 'Fascist style' that the polite form of addressing people in the third person (*Lei*, *Loro*) should be abolished, and the second plural (*Voi*) used instead. It was equally in the 'Fascist style' that everybody should either speak his thought openly or keep silent; and that no recommendations should influence decisions on the merits of people and things. All moral rules that might happen to be unpopular, especially in the official world, were to become popular through the name of 'Fascist style'. Of all these things, the only one which became effective was perhaps the use of *Voi* instead of *Lei*, *Loro*, because it became compulsory in all official correspondence and conversation; it is far from certain, however, that a greater familiarity and solidarity between the 'comrades' was thereby created.

In order that this doctrine and this 'style' might become second, or first, nature to the Italian people, many changes in the educational institutions and new organizations were needed. Both the Fascist Party in its own capacity, and the State through its legislative and executive power, worked in this direction for about twenty years.

## *Chapter Two*

### A DUAL SYSTEM: PARTY AND SCHOOLS

LONG before Fascism, the State had asserted its duty and its right to educate children, as we have seen. The supervision of all educational institutions, whether or not belonging to public bodies, was equally in the hands of the State. It might have been expected that the simple system in existence would lend itself perfectly to a totalitarian control of education, and to a transformation under the new rules and ideals. It happened, on the contrary, that the State system went on living its own life, while another powerful organization, a kind of State inside the State, was making its claim for the new education of youth. The schools and the Fascist Party with its dependent organizations had to share, from about 1925 onwards, the burden of bringing up young Italians. The interplay of these two partners was not always a collaboration; far from it. Nor was there at the beginning any plan which might lead, step by step, to a harmonious distribution of tasks.

In the frame of the scholastic system, independently of the activities of Party institutions, the Fascistization was restricted to the adaptation of curricula and programmes to the requirements of an exalted nationalism and faith in the Duce. This was done on a very large scale in the elementary schools; the effect of this trend was much less noticeable, although rapidly growing, in the secondary schools; the Faculties of Political Sciences and, to a certain extent, of Law were practically the only ones to feel the impact of the new 'doctrines' on the university. Apart from this, the history of the schools of all grades between 1925 and 1937 shows the characteristics which have been noticed throughout the previous seventy years: a great instability in many details of the curricula, examinations, and organization of single types of schools; and a fairly steady increase in the number of pupils, classes, and schools, especially for the elementary grade and the universities. A process peculiar to these years and to those that followed is the reaction against the reform of 1923, about which some facts have already been given. The centralization of control brought about by Gentile was further increased in 1931 with the last blow to the local autonomy of elementary education in a number of communes, and in 1935-36 with De Vecchi's drastic measures for dictatorial control by the Minister over all school activities in all grades.

The Fascist institutions connected with education constitute the most striking feature of the new 'era' in this field. The Party itself had no direct educational task; but the organizations which were set up under its impulse or sprang from it promised, or threatened, to give a completely new appearance, and perhaps a new heart, to the masses of people subject to education. The *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (O.N.B.), the *Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento*, the *Giovani Fasciste*, later on united in one single institution under the name of *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*, tried to monopolize the physical and political education of the young, and partly succeeded. The *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti* (G.U.F.) aimed at giving a great impulse and a new frame, of the type of a Procrustean bed, to the competitive and intellectual initiative of university students. The *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (O.N.D.) and the National Institute of Fascist Culture addressed themselves to the masses of adults; all cultural activities of a middle or lower degree were sponsored and controlled by these bodies; sports, excursions and competitions, theatre and cinema for the masses, and popular arts received through them a more or less marked Fascist stamp.

Organizations of this kind tried to insinuate themselves into the official frame of the State institutions. The most important example is the O.N.B. Although it bore a definite political character, and had come to life inside or just outside the Party, it acquired an official status and became a section of the department of National Education. Its aims were not restricted to physical education or training in political and military enthusiasm; large numbers of elementary schools were put under its direct control and management. This arrangement did not work; the Fascist institutions were not able to become completely State institutions; the O.N.B. having given way to the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*, the separation between youth organizations, under the Party, and school institutions, under the Ministry of Education, became final. But the interference did not end: physical education for the schools was allotted to the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*; and the secretary of the Party having become a member of the Cabinet in his own right, the organizations depending on him had a new official status.

The activities of some of these organizations, e.g., the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* and the O.N.D., included the setting up of schools and colleges; this side, however, did not develop in such a way as really to compete with the existing school system; it remained no more than an attempt, and not by any means a successful one. Where the competition succeeded was in the province of adult education; a rather restricted province, how-

ever, since evening courses of a cultural and technical character had not developed on a large scale either before or during Fascism.

The converging point of school life and of the activities of party organizations was, of course, the mind and body of the individual child. Even if the two types of institution had had clearly defined provinces, their effect on the children would hardly have been very harmonious. The schools required regular attendance; and, according to custom and curricula, all pupils had a good deal of homework after the three to six hours a day of school attendance. Holidays and shorter vacations were not left completely free from study; in fact they very often represented the best opportunity for 'catching up' if for any reason a child had got behind in the quick development of the year's programme. Concentration on his school duties was all that was expected from every pupil; the fewer the distractions the better. Youth organizations became more and more exacting; members were requested to attend regular meetings at week-ends and in holidays; on other occasions, unpredictable though they might be, the school authorities were urged and expected to release the children from their duties if the 'higher' Fascist duty required it. The time of the children had to be divided; more and more hours were to be devoted to the Party at the expense of school work. Attention and interest too were divided; distractions from study became practically compulsory.

The teachers had to be 'Fascitized' as well. The only way found for this in the secondary schools and the universities was to force on them allegiance to the régime. Membership of the Party became compulsory for new recruits, and a great 'honour' and advantage for the old ones; an oath of allegiance to the laws and to Fascism had to be taken and observed. The Fascist Association of Teachers was meant to promote not only the interests of that class, but also of Fascist ideals in the educational province. A firmer grip was assured by Fascism on the teachers of elementary schools by urging them to become officers in the Fascist organizations; only in this way could they be sure of enjoying all the rights of a normal career.

The 'duality' was felt very much, especially in the secondary schools. The old system was too much ingrained in the minds of both teachers and administrative personnel; the new institutions were in the hands of people with very vague ideas about the complex problems of education. Moreover, it was a characteristic of the Fascist State to try to set up a new life, a new system, without being able to get rid of the old one or merge the two together. The new 'religious' faith and Catholicism, the Party

and the State, the Militia and the Army, the O.V.R.A. and the Police, are some of the most evident examples of this dualism. Among the children, bound both to the school and to their Fascist organizations, the effects were of different kinds and of many shades: the most universal perhaps was that of scepticism and indifference about the values of education itself.

### Chapter Three

#### THE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS:

##### I. THE 'O.N.B.' AND 'GIOVANI FASCISTI'

THREE stages can be distinguished in the history of the youth organizations of the Fascist régime. The first stage extended from the beginning of Fascism down to April 1926; during this period the main associations were founded, but had still a rather irregular and independent life. The second stage began with the foundation of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (O.N.B.), which brought under the control of the Ministry of National Education the existing organizations for boys and girls up to eighteen years of age, and included the foundation of the *Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento*, depending directly on the Fascist Party. The third stage was marked by the foundation of the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio*, the unified organization which controlled, under the rule of the Party, and no longer of the Ministry of Education, all the organizations for boys and girls formerly depending on the O.N.B., as well as the *Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento*. This division into three periods does not apply, however, to the University Fascist Groups, which had an independent evolution.

The origin of the youth groups may be traced back almost to the beginning of the Fascist movement. They started as student groups, and in this way gave birth both to the university groups and to the *Avanguardie*. Between 1919 and 1921 only students were admitted as members of the associations for young people, called *Avanguardie studentesche dei Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*. At the end of 1921 the name was changed into that of *Avanguardie Giovanili Fasciste*, and young people of all conditions were accepted. In December of the same year the first group of Balilla was formed in Milan, for children under fourteen. At that stage, these formations had, of course, no educational purpose. The names themselves show their character. They had as their task to help in the fight for the acquisition of power. The name chosen for the younger groups was commemorative of a half-legendary boy who gave the lead in a revolt against the Austrians in Genoa in 1746; it had become proverbial after a warrior poet of the *Risorgimento*, Goffredo Mameli, had called upon all the 'sons of Italy' to be like Balilla. The Balilla groups were set up as an affiliation of the *Avanguardie*, and both

lived side by side with the Fascist Party, in a rather loose sort of dependence on it. By the time of the March on Rome the *Avanguardie* with their children's section had several hundred sections in about half the provinces of the Kingdom. A stricter bond of dependence on the Party was imposed on the *Avanguardie* and Balilla in 1924.

Membership was not great in the *Avanguardie* themselves, and was very low in the Balilla. Their activities were practically non-existent. The majority of the boys belonging to these formations were there simply because they had a fanatical father or brother, who wanted to testify to his faith through the children; a few among the *Avanguardisti* were adventurous boys who liked disorder and demonstrations and shouting. After the Fascist Party had come to power, the idea of turning these organizations into some kind of sports groups, or societies for physical education, arose. The decisions taken at the end of 1922 at the congress of the *Avanguardie* in Florence to make them the nursery for future members of the Party were the basis on which the political, physical, and military educational functions of these organizations were defined and, partly, put into practice. But the means at the disposal of the organizers were too small, and the people in charge of the sections were rarely capable of assuming the new role they should have played. The assignment to the Fascist Party, in 1924, of the task of giving strength and a plan to the *Avanguardie* did not bring the fruits which were expected by the heads of Fascism. The families who cared for their children to take part in extra-scholastic educational activities preferred the old organizations, especially the Young Explorers and Young Catholic Explorers, which eschewed political activities and militaristic bombast, to the doubtful educational advantages of the *Avanguardie* and Balilla formations.

Physical education, so far as it was given in the schools, was under the control of the Ministry of Public Instruction. When it was decided that something had to be done in order to improve the really low standard of public physical training, the Fascist authorities did not think it possible to rely on the Party organizations; and the *Ente Nazionale Educazione Fisica* (E.N.E.F.: National Corporation for Physical Training) was set up in Milan, with the purpose of training teachers and controlling all activities of that kind in the schools. It was only in 1926 that the idea of bringing the scattered activities aiming at the physical education of youth into one body became popular in Fascist circles. The need for this unification was mainly political. The schools maintained a distinctly non-political atmosphere; the boys and girls had



in the Church, at home, and in juvenile associations a non-Fascist or only partly 'Fascitized' atmosphere. It was of primary importance to disband as many as possible of the associations not depending on the Government or the Party, and to assign to some official organization some task which made it important, if not essential, to educational life as it existed at the time.

The law of 3 April 1926 provided for the foundation of O.N.B. 'for the physical and moral education of youth'; further details for the administrative and 'technico-disciplinary' organization of the O.N.B. were given by the Royal Decree of 9 January 1927, while as early as 19 April 1926 another decree had already supplemented the law issued two weeks earlier with drastic measures regarding other organizations for youth.

The law of 3 April 1926 included the following provisions. The new institution was open to boys and girls under eighteen; they were free to join it and to 'benefit' from it. The former organizations of the Balilla and *Avanguardisti* were to depend, from now onwards, on the O.N.B., and would have a proper military structure; they would be commanded by officers, and the rules for discipline would be determined by the Prime Minister in agreement with the Minister of War and the General Commander of the Fascist Militia. The *Avanguardisti* would receive mainly military instruction, and four years of active membership in the organization would exempt them from further attendance at pre-military courses. The O.N.B. was allowed to found, or to contribute to the foundation of, institutes for the assistance of youth; an existing body might receive financial support from it; the authorities managing scholarships might be compelled by the O.N.B. to give preference to its members in the assignment of grants. The leaders of the O.N.B. were entitled to promote reforms in other institutions for youth, so that they might be brought within the framework of the official organization. The O.N.B. was to be financed by associates, individuals, or bodies, through bequests, and by the State; a grant of a million lire a year would be given by the Ministry for the Interior. The administration was entrusted to a Central Council, appointed by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister; the head of the Council (*Presidente dell'O.N.B.*) must be a Consul-General of the Fascist Militia, and the members must include representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, Finance, War, Marine, Air, Education, and National Economy, the Militia, Gymnastic Federations, and the 'O.N.D.' Local committees under the control of the Central Council would be set up in every province, and, under the control of the provincial committees, in every commune.

The Decree of 19 April 1926 enacted that all organizations aiming at the instruction of youth, training for arts and crafts and professions, the physical, moral, and spiritual education, must be dissolved, and no new organization might be set up. Exception was made for the associations connected with the O.N.B. and for the Association of Young Catholic Italian Explorers. Even this association, however, was not allowed to set up new branches in towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants (unless they were 'county towns'); in any case, agreement must be reached with the O.N.B. before any new section was founded.

The Administrative Regulation defined the power of the Prime Minister in regard to the O.N.B. He was the 'highest' supervisor of this institution; in this capacity he had to give his approval to the budgets and to all general financial decisions; he could annul all measures taken by the Central Council and Executive Committee. The voluntary character of the association was re-stated; the applicants had, however, to obtain the approval of their fathers. The 'Technical and Disciplinary Regulation' gave more details about the aims of the O.N.B., and sketched the military organization of its members.

The O.N.B. aimed at giving young people (a) a strong sense of military discipline and education, (b) pre-military instruction, (c) gymnastic and sports instruction, (d) spiritual and cultural education, (e) professional and technical instruction, and (f) religious assistance and education. Discipline lay in the respect and obedience due from the *Balilla* and *Avanguardisti* to their commanders and all people entrusted with their education; the commanders in the O.N.B. were to be considered as the 'natural instructors and educators'. The *Balilla* and *Avanguardisti* were liable to several punishments, the severest being expulsion from the organization. They had to give the Fascist salute to commanders of all ranks, all authorities, and the national flag, and wear uniform during pre-military, gymnastic, and sports exercises and training, and at all public ceremonies. At the age of seventeen every *Avanguardista* became automatically enrolled for the pre-military courses organized by the Command of the Fascist Militia in agreement with the War Ministry. Gymnastics and training in sports were given according to the curriculum of the schools, and supplemented by excursions, camps, games, etc. The O.N.B. was to set up schools and centres of study and propaganda for the spiritual and cultural education of future Fascists; Fascist doctrine was to be expounded to them in special courses. Provincial and communal committees of the O.N.B. were to set up professional schools for young members. Religious education and assistance was to be secured through the appointment of a

priest acting as a central inspector, with the help of chaplains of the Militia. Christian doctrine and morals were to be taught according to Roman Catholic practice.

The Balilla and *Avanguardisti* were grouped in the following way. Eleven children and one squadron-leader constituted the smallest unit, the squadron; three squadrons formed a *manipolo* (a 'handful'), three *manipoli* a *centuria*, three *centurie* a troop, three and sometimes four or five troops one legion. The *Avanguardisti* were commanded by officers of the Fascist Militia, on appointment by the General Commander. The Balilla were under the orders of Fascist teachers; preference being given to those teachers who were officers in the Militia.

Towards the end of 1930 a new organization was created for boys between eighteen and twenty-one years of age: the *Fasci Giovanili di Combattimento*. Unlike the O.N.B., the *Fasci Giovanili* were not controlled by the Ministry of National Education, but by the Fascist Party. The *Fasci Giovanili* had as their members all the *Avanguardisti* above eighteen and all those young people who had never entered the O.N.B. and had decided to join the Fascist formations after that age. The aim of this new organization was mainly political; while the 'O.N.B.' gave training of a physical and military character, supplemented only by a spiritual education, and proposed to transform the boy into a 'soldier' of the Fascist cause, the *Fasci Giovanili* had to prepare the youths to become members of the Party, the politicians of the future. Little more than one year after their creation, the *Fasci Giovanili* were partly re-formed. Their military character became fundamental, not so much in regard to the activities of the members as to the hierarchical organization. The Fascist Party, which had been kept free from all regimentation into squadrons with their officers and other ranks, had now, in the *Fasci Giovanili*, its reserve of soldiers. Apart from the regimentation, however, they did not have much of the army about them: their activities were mostly sports and physical training, reviews on important national occasions, and spasmodic lectures on political problems. Soon some *reparti celeri* were formed, in which physical training had a fundamental part, and the military aims were much more apparent; a kind of 'storm troops' was intended to be the result of these sectional activities; and Mussolini's wish to have as many 'swift battalions' as possible brought about the transformation of all the *Fasci Giovanili* into *Reparti celeri*. In this way, the Fascist tradition of the *squadre d'azione*, for internal war, and the pre-Fascist tradition of the *Arditi* would be kept perpetually alive. On the other hand, other activities of a more intellectual character, such as theatrical and cinema performances,

libraries, and summer and winter sports and camps were intended to give the *Giovani Fascisti* a wider outlook on life and culture.

The regimentation of girls followed the same lines as that of the boys. The groups of girls which had been set up without a nation-wide plan in several places, were merged into three organizations: the *Piccole Italiane*, the *Giovani Italiane*, and the *Giovani Fasciste*. The *Piccole Italiane* corresponded to the Balilla, the *Giovani Italiane* to the *Avanguardisti*, and the *Giovani Fasciste* to the *Giovani Fascisti*; the two first belonged to the O.N.B. and, therefore, came under the Ministry of National Education, the third were under the direct control of the Fascist Party. The girls were bound by practically the same discipline as the boys; they wore a uniform on all public occasions, and when they met for their exercises, training, lectures, and other activities; they were grouped in formations almost as exactly defined as the military formations for the boys. A prominent part of their activities was to be physical training; but among the main aims of the organization were the control and increase of welfare work, the setting up of schools and laboratories for needlework or for other works more suitable for women. Sports and gymnastics were to aim at health and beauty, more than at an excessive physical strength. Political and cultural activities were to prepare the future mother, who would educate her children in the ideals of Fascism.

## Chapter Four

### THE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS: II. THE 'G.I.L.'

AN important change in the youth organizations was brought about by the decree-law of 27 October 1937 enacting the foundation of the *Gioventù Italiana del Littorio* (G.I.L.). This gave a more unified frame to all formations of the young Fascists, bringing under the same command all sections of the O.N.B., and the *Giovani Fascisti* and *Giovani Fasciste*. Their military character was given greater prominence by making instruction in war weapons for boys over eleven years of age an essential part of their activities; the control of all young people was handed over to the Fascist Party, to the exclusion of the Ministry of National Education. As this development was the last it may be useful to give a few details of the contents of the decree-law.

The first article reads as follows: 'The G.I.L. is the one and all-comprehensive organization of the juvenile forces of the Fascist régime, in the framework of the Fascist National Party; it is under the direct control of the Party Secretary, who is its General Commander. The motto of the G.I.L. is: "Believe, obey, fight".' The end of the authority held by the Ministry of National Education and the extent of the Party Secretary's power are determined in the two following articles: 'The O.N.B. is absorbed into the G.I.L. and the powers formerly attributed to the Minister for National Education will pass to the Secretary of the Fascist Party, who has henceforward the authority to dictate and change the rules for the organization and activities of the G.I.L. in Italy, Italian Africa, and the Dodecanese.' All members have to take the oath of allegiance to the Duce: 'In the name of God and Italy I swear that I will carry out the Duce's orders and serve with all my strength and, if need be, with my life the cause of the Fascist revolution.'

The aims set down in Article 5 did not differ substantially from those of the O.N.B. and the *Giovani Fascisti*. The new 'hierarchy' included: (a) the Commandant General, in the person of the Secretary of the Fascist Party; (b) two Vice-Commandant Generals; (c) the Head of the General Staff; (d) the Vice-Head of the General Staff; (e) one Federal Commandant in each province, in the person of the provincial Secretary of the Fascist Party; (f) one Federal Vice-Commandant for the *Giovani*

*Fascisti*, and one for the *Avanguardisti* and *Balilla* in each province; (g) one Commandant each for the Fascist Youth, *Avanguardisti*, and *Balilla* in each commune. The financial needs of the organization were met by the contributions of public and private bodies on a so-called voluntary basis.

The G.I.L. had the following sections, according to the age and sex of its members:

Boys from	6 to 8 years	.	.	<i>Figli della Lupa</i> (Wolf-cubs)
	8 to 11	"	.	<i>Balilla</i>
	11 to 13	"	.	<i>Balilla Moschettieri</i> (Musketeers)
	13 to 15	"	.	<i>Avanguardisti</i>
	15 to 17	"	.	<i>Avanguardisti Moschettieri</i>
	17 to 21	"	.	<i>Giovani Fascisti</i>
GIRLS from	6 to 8	"	.	<i>Figlie della Lupa</i>
	8 to 14	"	.	<i>Piccole Italiane</i>
	14 to 17	"	.	<i>Giovani Italiane</i>
	17 to 21	"	.	<i>Giovani Fasciste</i>

The regimentation was on the lines set down for the O.N.B., with a few changes, especially as regards the *Giovani Fascisti*.

The two main objects of the G.I.L. were physical and military education; the spiritual side was inherent in these, inasmuch as the Fascist creed was a warlike one: health and strength and discipline were more necessary than anything else to those who were to become soldiers and conquerors. Physical education was organized according to a plan meant to give a regular, scientific development of the body. Four grades of training were laid down for the physical education of boys and girls from eight to eighteen years of age, each grade lasting about three years. In the first grade physical training was almost exclusively confined to recreational exercises, minor games, marching and running. Games and competitions were developed in the second period. The last two periods were devoted largely to different types of athletics and specialized exercises according to the capacity of the individual; individual training, however, did not stop collective exercises, so that not only fitness, but preparedness for military life was kept in view.

Physical education was given by the G.I.L. through two different channels, i.e., directly in the framework of its own organization, and in the framework of the elementary and secondary public and private schools. The plan mentioned above was followed in both cases, and the curricula for physical education in the schools were drawn up in conformity with that plan. The children, however, found themselves in a different position according as they underwent their teaching and training as pupils of the schools or as members of the G.I.L., although the

distinction was not always clear. They were bound by their scholastic duty to attend the lessons in physical training and could not pass from form to form if they failed to attend them regularly and successfully. On the other hand they were bound by a kind of military duty to attend all the meetings, games, and training organized for them by the G.I.L. independently of the schools. It was in the latter capacity that the G.I.L. had most of its military influence. The very facts that the children were bound to wear their uniforms when attending the G.I.L. as such, more strictly than when they attended it as pupils of a school; that their commanders had military powers to punish them, while the school teachers of physical training, although belonging to, and appointed by, the G.I.L. had to report to the school authorities; that the children were grouped into military formations when training as members of the G.I.L., and divided into forms and classes when they practised as students—these facts all made them feel the difference between civil and military life inside the G.I.L. itself, from the point of view of discipline.

On the other hand, the G.I.L. gave a military instruction which was in part mixed with physical training, in part quite distinct from it. Thus, the *Balilla Moschettieri* and the *Avanguardisti* learned the use of rifles from the age of eleven; they were taken to visit military installations wherever it was practicable; boys from sixteen upwards could also be taught to handle machine-guns, tanks, and other modern weapons, and might even join, for temporary practice, the Territorial Anti-aircraft Defence Corps. The military (armed) instruction as such was, however, limited to a minority of the members of the G.I.L. under eighteen. Above this age, all boys were bound to attend the *Corsi Pre-militari*. These courses were organized and given by the military authorities of the army and militia, and became, in course of time, almost as compulsory as military service itself. The decision taken on 3 February 1938 by the Supreme Committee of Defence entrusted the G.I.L. with the pre-military instruction, making it the main activity for this body for the *Giovani Fascisti*. While military instruction for *Balilla* and *Avanguardisti* had no definite plan, and had to adapt itself to local conditions and opportunity, the *pre-militare* was quite a regular service, which kept the boys busy for a few hours every Saturday or Sunday for six to eight months every year until they were conscripted. Training included the use of weapons, military reconnaissance, tactical study of the ground, handling of topographical instruments, and so on.

Apart from the military and gymnastic training, which kept the boy and girl members of the G.I.L. busy, more or less

regularly, for some hours at the week-end almost throughout the year, opportunity for a fuller and concentrated physical life was given in the vacations, especially during the summer, by the holiday-military camps and by specially organized 'colonies' on the mountains or at the seaside. The most noted, though by no means the best organized or fruitful, of these camps was the *Campo Dux*, which was organized every year in Rome. Up to 30,000 boys used to meet there for a week, living in tents and spending their time in games, exercises, and parades.

Enrolment in the G.I.L. was, by statute, voluntary. But given the ever-stronger impact of the Fascist Party on public and private life in Italy, it became difficult for families to keep their children out of this organization, especially if they attended school. Circular letters from the Ministry of Public Education multiplied, urging headmasters and teachers to see that as many students as possible applied for the honour of joining the uniformed formations of the rejuvenated Italy; on the other hand, the Party authorities had not stinted their resources of propaganda, promises, and, if expedient, threats, in order to swell the ranks and gather a unanimous response to the 'patriotic' call. It was more difficult to find suitable leaders, organizers, and teachers or trainers. The problem of supplying the commanders, section-leaders, squadron-leaders, and other officers was partly, but only to a small extent, met by a special rapid course held in Rome and other big towns, mainly in the summer, lasting a few weeks; senior members of the G.I.L. were there trained in the art of military and political leadership, so that the instructors and officers came more and more from the rank and file of the young army. A more complete and better solution was given to the problem of preparing a sufficient number of teachers of physical training for the secondary schools. The old training schools for these teachers were replaced by the Fascist Academy of Physical Training in the Farnesina building and grounds in Rome, where boys from all over Italy received a three-year course of instruction, not only of a physical and military character, but of a political and medical character as well; a similar Academy for girls was set up in Orvieto. All new teachers of physical training had to produce a degree obtained in one or other of these academies.

The G.I.L., like the O.N.B., was given the right to manage or found schools and colleges of various kinds, especially of a vocational character, so that its members might receive a more complete education in the Fascist sense; school life and Party life were to find in them that harmony which proved so difficult in the other schools. The experiment, however, failed; as early



as 1941 the G.I.L. was officially deprived of that right, and the few schools and colleges which had been opened or taken over by it were either transformed or handed over to the *Ente Nazionale per la Scuola Media*. On another point, the G.I.L. lost very important ground which had been held by the O.N.B. The elementary schools of the rural type, which had been taken over by the O.N.B. during its eleven years of life and were attended by tens of thousands of children, passed under the direct control of the Ministry of National Education when the G.I.L. was founded; it would have been impossible, or very dangerous, to deprive the educational authorities of the supervision of so many schools; and since the control of the youth organization by the Ministry of Education was discontinued with the institution of the G.I.L., controlled by the Fascist Party alone, it was almost inevitable that the rural schools should have gone back to ministerial administration. The O.N.B. had been perhaps the most important attempt to link up the State organization with the Party; the severance of the link through the foundation of the G.I.L. probably signified the failure of these efforts.

## Chapter Five

### THE YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS: III. THE 'G.U.F.'

THE *Gruppi Universitari Fascisti* (G.U.F.) originated from a few groups of Fascist students who had organized themselves in a more or less close connexion with the *Fasci di Combattimento*, later the Fascist Party. At the time of the March on Rome they were united in a National Federation, which existed side by side with other student associations, the most important being the *Unione Nazionale Universitaria*, from which it was however distinguished in that it was a purely political association, a kind of *squadre d'azione* in the universities. When the Fascist *squadre d'azione* were dissolved and their place taken by the Fascist Voluntary Militia, the university groups lost their *raison d'être* as a fighting body; they retained a function as a semi-independent section of the Fascist Party aiming at propaganda and political control among students and university teachers. The totalitarian drive towards the abolition of all autonomous associations found in the G.U.F., whose ties with the Party authorities were becoming closer and closer, the means for the destruction and absorption of all other clubs, groups, and associations among university students. The *Unione Nazionale Universitaria* was forced to merge with the G.U.F. and all the local societies which had adhered to the *Unione* were consequently dissolved and replaced by the local G.U.F. in all activities which were considered to be consistent with the Fascist régime. As the only Italian students' organization, the G.U.F. became a member of the International Confederation of Students.

Membership of the G.U.F. was voluntary; members of the 'Fascist Youth', and of the Fascist Party who were students, were naturally members of the G.U.F. as well; but other students too were allowed to join the G.U.F., subject to the approval of the Secretary of the local group. Former students might continue their membership even after the completion of their studies until they reached their twenty-sixth year. This organization was, since the early 'thirties, completely controlled by the Fascist Party; in fact the Secretary of the Fascist Party was, by right, the Secretary of the G.U.F. for the whole of Italy, and the Vice-Secretary of the G.U.F. was appointed by the Party Secretary; the doings of the 'second-in-command' were strictly watched, since he had to reside at Party Headquarters. The whole of the

organization was divided into provincial sections, having their headquarters in the 'county towns'; here, too, the acting Secretary of the provincial group was chosen, not by the students, but by the Federal Secretary (the provincial head of the Fascist Party), as were the other members of the *Direttorio* of the provincial G.U.F.; the appointment had to be approved by the Rector of the university, wherever there was one, and by the Secretary of the Party. The members came under the control of the Secretary of the group in the university town during term time, and of that of their town of residence during the vacations. Smaller sections could be set up in any town where there were at least twenty-five student members (*Nuclei Universitari*); female sections existed wherever there were Fascist women students; in university towns sections for foreign students could be set up if there were at least ten of them willing to join. The G.U.F. had less of a military character than any of the other youth organizations of the Fascist régime; regimentation and discipline were not so strict, nor was there a special uniform to be worn, apart from that of the *Avanguardista* or Party member.

Having absorbed all the other student organizations, the G.U.F. had a very wide range of activities; some were completely new in the life of the students, and these were mainly the political ones, directed by non-student bodies; others were altered, especially those which required the initiative of individuals and small groups, as the 'goliardic' ceremonies and amusements, newspapers, and debating societies. Military activities were not much in evidence in the G.U.F., and were left to the military authorities and the Fascist Militia, which included some special battalions of University Militia, and organized pre-military instruction for the young people, both students and non-students. Nor was there any kind of physical training obligatory on all members, as in the *Avanguardisti* and Fascist Youth. The proper activities of the G.U.F. could be grouped under four headings: sports, assistance, politics, and culture. Although it was the moral duty of all members to take an active part in all these activities, nobody was really compelled to take part in any, except in some of the political ones. Some attempts on the part of the G.U.F. and the Fascist Party through them to have a direct say in the administration of the universities themselves succeeded only to a small extent.

The activities connected with sports, games, and physical training were the most prominent. Almost all the football clubs, swimming and rowing societies (*Rari Nantes*, etc.), and sports groups, which existed before the foundation of, or side by side with, the G.U.F., continued and some of them largely increased

their activities. The best association for students was the University Section of the Italian Alpine Club (S.U.C.A.I.), which was extremely popular, especially in northern Italy: all possible facilities were given to students willing to tour, climb, or camp in the mountains; huts were built in many places not easily accessible; trips and camps were organized every year. The G.U.F. made this kind of sport much more popular among students, and, following the fashion, increased enormously the liking for and practice of winter touring and ski-ing in the Alps and Apennines. Football and lawn tennis too became more and more popular; some new games, on the contrary, which were meant to give a Fascist character to sport, such as *Volata*, a kind of team game invented by one Party Secretary, Augusto Turati, did not meet with any success.

In regard to assistance, the aim of the G.U.F. should have been to help students in need of financial help and advice, especially at the beginning of their studies. The liking for grandiose things, however, urged the G.U.F. authorities towards bigger schemes, which attracted the attention of outsiders much more than they met the requirements of the many in need. The *Casa dello Studente* illustrated the type of thing done by the G.U.F. It generally consisted of one or more buildings with very comfortable accommodation for a small percentage of students, a restaurant for many more, reading and writing-rooms, a meeting-hall, and a recreation ground. A small proportion of the rooms was reserved for poor students who were judged by the political authorities worthy of help; the others were let to other students and persons connected with the university at prices not much below those of boarding-houses. The poorer students who were not lucky enough to be granted free board derived no real advantage from this institution.

The political work of the G.U.F. was varied. The most striking was the 'parading'. In university towns, where a number of students ranging from a thousand to ten thousand or more converged for their studies, the frequent appearance in public, for all the national and Party ceremonies, of even one section of their numbers gave the impression of an almost universal allegiance to the régime among intellectual youth. But other things were done by the G.U.F. for the propagation of Fascist ideas both among students and among other people. It became customary a few years before the war started, approximately at the time of the Abyssinian war, to send on special occasions politically reliable university students to address students of secondary schools and workers on subjects of national, or at least Fascist importance. The special field allotted to them

was propaganda in colonial ideas. In many places a member of the G.U.F. was delegated by the National Institute of Fascist Culture to organize courses of lectures, publish articles, and keep alive by all possible means the 'colonial ideal' inside and outside the universities. Bordering on the cultural work was the participation in the study of corporative problems and the propagation of corporative ideas with which the G.U.F. was entrusted, the aim being to bring the students into active connexion with the workers so that they could learn and at the same time teach what their problems were and how they were to be solved. The Ministry for Corporations favoured the institution of special libraries, and the setting up of extra-mural courses on the Corporative Law.

The contribution of the G.U.F. to the cultural life of the students was not large. Here and there were some literary and art groups; some exhibitions of paintings, sculpture, and architectural plans took place from time to time; more remarkable perhaps than anything else was the attempt to spread an interest in documentary and art films. One feature of some importance for studies was, however, organized by the G.U.F. It was the exception in Italian universities for courses of lectures to be published by the teacher himself. Since, however, the special matter dealt with by the 'professors' of the different subjects (*corsi monografici*) almost always had to be studied by candidates for examinations, and attendance was rather low, it was necessary for the students to provide for the printing, in one way or other, of the notes taken at the lessons. Very often the notes were corrected by the teacher himself, who, however, rarely took any responsibility for their exactness. In many cases these *dispense*, as the lithographic copies of the notes were termed, were not at all good, and more often they appeared very irregularly; nor was the financial management always good, and the prices were extremely high, much higher than those of very good books of the same size. The G.U.F. took over almost everywhere the printing of the *dispense*, making a regular publication of them, and urging the teachers to make the contents more reliable. The results seem to have been on the whole quite good, apart from the frequent 'racket' attached to things of this kind, and the fact that the students who were entrusted with the job of taking the notes were not always the best. The avowed aim of this work by the G.U.F. was however not only cultural (and financial), but political: teachers knew that all their words were checked and, if necessary, censored by persons appointed by the Fascist Party.

In both sport and culture, the G.U.F. organized annual competitions, which took an ever-increasing share of the interest and time of students in the five years preceding the war. The

*Littoriali dello Sport* and the *Littoriali della Cultura e dell'Arte* attracted the participation, often spontaneous, of thousands of students from all the universities. The competitions took place every year at various times; if, as often happened, they took place in term time, the students taking part in them were excused attendance at lessons and laboratories. Usually the time chosen for them was in December and January for winter sports, April and May for other sports and games, and for art and culture. The *Littoriali* were meant both to display and propagate the virtues and values of the youthful Fascist civilization and to encourage the greatest possible number of students to create works of art and culture and to develop their strength and gifts, in harmony with the spirit of the 'new era'. In the words of Achille Starace, former Secretary of the Fascist Party, 'the *Littoriali* testified to the existence of the integral education pursued by Fascism, the result of which would be the "new Italian man", vigorous and aware of his strength, citizen and soldier'. Before entering the competitions everyone had to take the following oath: 'I will fight in order to overcome all trials, beat all records in the sports field through my vigour, and in the competitions of science through my knowledge. I will fight to win in the name of Italy. I will fight according to the Duce's orders.' No student who was not a Fascist could, of course, take part in these competitions.

The *Littoriali* also included public debates on scientific and political problems, the subjects being decided in advance, so that as many students as possible might prepare for the competition. They ought to have formed the most interesting part in the show, and to have canalized in some way the natural instinct towards discussion which, for want of control and order, might have led astray even the best among the young ones. Both for these debates and for all the other *Littoriali*, the local groups of the G.U.F. organized some months in advance of the real competitions the *Pre-Littoriali*, from which the best of each university were chosen to represent it at the *Littoriali*. All the activities they entailed tended to monopolize the time and energy which the student could devote to the non-academic life. This happened specially, for instance, with regard to cinema and theatrical productions and some sports.

An idea of the *Littoriali della Cultura e dell'Arte* may be obtained from the subjects proposed for the competitions in 1936 at Venice. Essays and discussions had regard to the following subjects:

Foreign and Colonial Policy: The importance of the Mediterranean for Italy and the life of Europe.

Fascist Doctrine and Policy: Relationship between the Party and the Corporations in the Fascist State.

Literature: Oversea countries in Italian literature.

Theatre: The place of the theatre in political propaganda.

Painting and sculpture: Italianity and Europeanism.

Music: War music in connexion with the psychology of the peoples.

Cinema: The cinema considered as a document of the civilization of a country.

Science: The contributions made by Italian thinkers to the progress of science.

Among the prize essays were the following: *Inter-syndical Committees and Provincial Councils for the Corporative Economy*; *Effectiveness of State Intervention in Demographical Matters*; *The Red Sea and Italian Colonial Policy*; *The Party as a Military Strength*; *Italian Agriculture and Foreign Trade*; *British Policy towards Italy in connexion with the Abyssinian Question*; *Biography of an Italian Pioneer*; the poem '*Cemetery of the Volunteers*'; a musical composition, *War March*.

The right was several times claimed by members, even authoritative ones, of the G.U.F. to join with the academic authorities in the discussion of university administration, the time-table of the lectures and examinations, financial help to poor students, scholarships, and various other activities. It was not rare to hear students belonging to the G.U.F. going much further, and asking for a kind of control over the cultural side of academic life as well. The result was that a member appointed by the Secretary of the G.U.F. sat on several boards dealing with exemption from fees, grants and scholarships, and saw that the political merits of the candidates were taken into consideration before any decision was taken on financial, moral, and intellectual merits. The time-table of the examinations often had to undergo changes required by the G.U.F. on account either of the *Littoriali* or of political demonstrations. The principle that academic life should stop completely during the *Littoriali* was not accepted by the university authorities, but a large increase of indulgence had to be granted, both for attendance at the lectures and for proficiency in the examinations, to those who indulged in political activities or took part in the competitions. Consultation with the Secretary of the G.U.F. was normal in all matters connected with politics, and frequent in those connected with the building or allocation of new laboratories, premises, and institutes; in this case, however, it is difficult to imagine that it was much more than an act of courtesy on the part of the university authorities.

## Chapter Six

### THE 'O.N.D.' AND 'I.N.C.F.'

THE youth organizations were not the only Fascist institutions which claimed the right to improve the standard of education and spread the new doctrine and faith among the Italian people. The G.I.L. and the associations which preceded it took care of young persons till their twenty-first year; and even then, a large number were unwilling or were not easily induced to attend all the meetings, which did not attract everyone. Even before Fascism some kind of entertainment with an instructional content had proved to be the best way of reaching the workers. The sport and cultural associations of all kinds which we have mentioned above had met, at least in part, the need of poorer people wishing to broaden their outlook; their character was very varied, extending from football clubs to theatre companies, from popular libraries to the *Università Popolari* and to regular courses of study in arts and crafts. Some of them were politically neutral, others were affiliated to, or emanated from, political parties. Following in the steps of these institutions, and in time absorbing them or taking their place, the Fascist Party and régime evolved the big organizations called the *Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro* (O.N.D.), and the *Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista* (I.N.C.F.), while some of the educational functions of those voluntary bodies were transferred to the Fascist Syndicates.

The task imposed on the O.N.D. by the Fascist authorities was very ambitious; in the words of Achille Starace, the O.N.D. must carry out the commandment which was one of the Fascist slogans: *Andare verso il popolo* (Appeal to the masses); 'the O.N.D. must provide physical, moral, and artistic education, technical instruction, and moral assistance to the great masses of people.' The Fascist groups, even before becoming a Party, had set up in some places some kind of meeting centres or clubs for their members; the first were founded in 1920, as an imitation of the Socialist *Camere del Lavoro*. In 1923 the Confederation of the Fascist Syndicates undertook to supervise and give a better organization to the existing groups of this kind, which had assumed the name of *Dopolavoro* ('After-work'); the local sections were linked together into provincial associations, and all were becoming branches of one national body. The totalitarian



drive against all independent associations and institutions was responsible for the decrees of 1925 granting to the O.N.D. the title of *Ente Parastatale* (semi-State corporation), and thereby giving it a status superior to that of all other institutions of the same kind. Step by step all the other societies were either dissolved or brought into the framework of the O.N.D.; almost every sport and cultural body of a popular character wanting to survive had to apply for membership and affiliation to the new organization. This, coupled with some financial advantages in connexion with cinemas, theatres, and travel, immediately brought it an immense number of members.

The aims set down for the O.N.D. by the Royal Decree of 1 May 1925 were: (a) to promote a healthy and fruitful use of free hours for intellectual and manual workers, setting up and running institutions for the development of their physical, intellectual and moral gifts; (b) to increase and co-ordinate such institutions, giving them and their members all possible assistance. The financial needs were met by a State contribution, and various forms of help coming from the local authorities, and public and private bodies, and by a very small fee paid by every member.

The supervision and responsibility for the proper working of the O.N.D. passed in 1927 into the hands of the Fascist Party itself and a Commissary Extraordinary appointed by the Prime Minister. Its later administration was governed by the Royal Decree Law of 22 December 1931, partly modified in 1937. According to these rules, the O.N.D. was put under the high supervision of the Prime Minister, was presided over by the Secretary of the Party, and was managed by a Director-General with the help of two General Secretaries. Six central committees were entrusted with the planning and supervision of (1) the organization of the local groups, (2) sports, (3) excursions, (4) education and art, (5) assistance, and (6) financial administration. A provincial Directory sat in the 'county town'; it was controlled by the central authority and directed the activities of all the local groups in the province through the channel of special commissions corresponding approximately to the six central committees. In each Commune there was a local directory watching over the *Dopolavoro comunale*, *Dopolavoro aziendale* (minor groups for the workers of big factories, mines, farms), and affiliated associations.

The largest association to be absorbed by the O.N.D. was the Italian Federation of Excursions, which was dissolved in 1935, while the vast sports organization *Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano* (C.O.N.I.) remained partly independent; its activities,

however, had to be co-ordinated with those of the O.N.D. It was in fact in the field of sport and excursions that the O.N.D. most impressed its character on the life of the Italian people. While the great 'professional' competitions were left to the C.O.N.I., the O.N.D. reserved for itself the organizing of sports facilities for hundreds of thousands of people. In all centres of some importance the O.N.D. patronized the most popular sports, especially those which appealed to the tastes of the local population. It was difficult to say how many of the sporting enterprises were due to the O.N.D., and how many would have continued or started their existence; but it is certain that if ski-ing, lawn tennis, and swimming became popular with thousands and thousands of workers, this was largely due to the ample possibilities open to such a big organization as the O.N.D. and to the enthusiasm of some of its leaders. Popular sports, such as *boccie* (Italian bowls), were given a new status by regular and numerous tournaments on a provincial and national scale.

The contribution to touring, even though not so extensive, was much more impressive than that to sports. Sundays and holidays became days of travel for hundreds of thousands of people of all classes, especially the poorer. Apart from multiplying the number of short trips in the immediate vicinity of every town, or to the towns from the villages of the countryside, the O.N.D. facilitated, and sometimes created, mass travel to distant places, with the running of *treni popolari* (excursion trains). It is true that these trains were organized by the railway companies, but it was the O.N.D. that urged the idea, and popularized it, and often organized parties of week-end travellers ranging from ten to several hundreds. Between 1935 and 1939 it can be reckoned that an average of 100,000 people a year travelled on these special very cheap trains, on visits to Naples from Milan, to the Dolomites from Bologna, to Rome from Genoa, etc. Trains leaving late at night or early in the morning carried these people to 'enjoy' a day in a town or a part of the country they had never dreamt of being able to see at such low cost. Acquaintance with the beauties of their own country, the destruction of sectionalism and parochialism, the bringing together of masses of people from distant parts, and a new kind of relief to the hard and poverty-stricken life of the Italian worker were the aims which the O.N.D. claimed to achieve by this system; while health and happiness were to be achieved through other kinds of excursions, such as trips to the mountains, a day on the lake or the sea, and walks into the countryside.

While the unity of the Italian people was being fostered by much travel, the O.N.D. was entrusted with the task of reviving

and keeping alive local traditions and folk-lore all over the country and making them more widely known. National meetings were organized, with competitions, for all kinds of popular groups preserving the customs of their native place; choirs of folk-songs, local games, costumes, dances, processions from many parts of Italy appeared in Venice, Rome, and elsewhere, in order to show how much still remained of the picturesque and patriarchal life of the past, and to encourage people to continue to preserve it. The local groups of the *Dopolavoro* became in a way the trustees of these traditions and customs. Strictly related with these activities were those aiming at a revival of local forms of art and artistic industries, for which the O.N.D. organized several exhibitions and opened courses of instructions.

Many of the local popular theatrical companies continued to exist, and several new ones were started. But it does not appear that this side of the O.N.D. work met with much success. Most people who joined the organization out of an interest in the theatre or cinema did so because special reductions in prices of seats had been obtained by it for its members. One activity, however, which became quite popular was the *Carro di Tespi*. This was a kind of caravan opera theatre which often brought good performances of classical plays to small towns lacking theatrical facilities. Every year the *Carro di Tespi* travelled for two or three months, stopping for one or more evenings in towns or villages, and giving cheap and instructive amusement in isolated places.

In two more ways the O.N.D. helped to shape the character of its members. Especially in the smaller villages the room or rooms of the *Dopolavoro* were the only meeting-place, apart from the church, market, and public-house. Whether the *Dopolavoro* took the place of a former club, either political or social, or was set up by the Fascist Party, it was a Fascist institution, and the members, whether they belonged to the Party or not, were linked with the Fascist régime at least through their membership of the O.N.D. The portrait of the Duce was prominent in every room, the symbols of the Party had their place of honour, the group attended as such, with its Fascist flag (the *gagliardetto*), all public manifestations, whilst newspapers and propaganda publications were almost the only reading matter at the disposal of the members; so that the *Dopolavoro* was calculated to make people feel bound to the régime and its leader whenever they used the premises of the O.N.D. or took part with their fellow-members in public meetings, excursions, and games. Moreover, the forming of sports, amusement, and cultural societies was one of the few activities in which the more enterprising elements of

the working masses had scope for their initiative in public life; the O.N.D. gave them the feeling that their initiative must be subordinated to the initiative and will of the central organizers, and in the last instance, of the Duce. This sense of totalitarian discipline with all its freezing consequences was brought home very much to the more active-minded; while the others accepted as a gift from above what they would not have been able to obtain otherwise.

The O.N.D. became the biggest single association in Italy; the membership rose from 280,000 in 1926 to 3,180,000 in 1937. This did not mean, of course, that three million men and women were living the 'life of the *Dopolavoro*'; by far the great majority of these members joined the organization with nothing else in view but the financial advantages to be gained. It was certain, however, that in the *Dopolavoro* many non-politically-minded people found something useful and pleasing to their tastes, and received the impression that Fascism really strove to 'appeal to the masses' in amusement and education.

The National Fascist Institute of Culture, later called *Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista* (I.N.C.F.), took the place, broadly speaking, of the *Università Popolari*. The latter had been taken over by the O.N.D. in the first years of its life as a national, officially recognized association. In 1925 the National Fascist Institute of Culture was founded in Rome with the task of spreading and protecting national culture and Fascist ideas at home and abroad. Although it was immediately recognized as a body of public value (*Ente Morale*), its beginnings were very poor, and not only from the financial point of view (the contribution of the State amounted to 10,000 lire, i.e., £110). The main work it had to carry out 'under the high vigilance of the Prime Minister' was to publish magazines, series of books and pamphlets both of a popular and of a scientific character. Soon, however, many sections were started in other towns, so that the existence of the *Università Popolari* became useless, since their independence had practically disappeared after control had passed into the hands of the *Dopolavoro*. The activities of the I.N.C.F. multiplied in the last ten years of Fascism, the main one being, however, not the publication of magazines and books (although this continued on a large scale), but the delivering of public lectures, often free, on all kinds of subjects. Politics in the Fascist sense played, of course, the largest part in these lectures, but it was by no means the only subject; literature, both Italian and foreign, languages, history, and science were the subjects of many a talk for people of a semi-intellectual bourgeoisie. There was a more marked class division in the O.N.D.

and I.N.C.F. than there was in the *Università Popolari*, which actually aimed at bridging the gap between those who had never had an opportunity of obtaining more than an elementary education and others. Every town, however small, came to have its I.N.C.F., depending directly on the Fascist Party; attendance varied from place to place, and from lecture to lecture, and it is impossible to say how far the influence of this political and cultural teaching went; it does not seem, however, that there was a great interest in it, and it may not be untrue to say that the negative effect was greater than the positive. This way of meeting somehow, if not satisfactorily, the need for an extempore cultivation of the mind, kept people back from trying to give free vent to their desire of knowing and discussing matters of political, moral, and intellectual interest.

The professional education of the workers, a task allotted to the syndicates by the *Carta del Lavoro* (Charter of Labour), was fulfilled only to a very small degree. The few apprenticeship or other courses which were taken over or set up by the syndicates had no appreciable influence in shaping the new popular culture on which Fascism wanted to pride itself. Bottai, who was perhaps the strongest upholder of this type of education and of these duties on the part of the syndicates, as late as 1939 protested against the ineffectiveness of the appeals sanctioned in the Charter of Labour. The only real effect on education which could be attributed to the syndicates was the propagation in the schools of syndicalist or corporative doctrine; and not only in the schools: lectures and publications of all kinds, organized or supported by the Ministry of Corporations and by the various Confederations and Federations of Syndicates went very far in persuading the people that the 'Corporative State' was something that existed, although they did not persuade many people that there was anything in it. In the faint and often unrecognizable struggle between the upholders of the Party and Duce-mysticism and those of the syndicalistic State, the field of education and propaganda for the masses was largely won by the Party through the O.N.D. and I.N.C.F.

There is no clear-cut line between education and political propaganda in a Fascist country; and Fascists would argue that the activities of the Ministry of Popular Culture, formerly the Ministry of Press and Propaganda, belonged to the realm of education. It was, however, difficult to find in the Italian Press and in those cinema productions and other types of publicity which formed the bulk of the work of this Ministry anything which might be termed 'educative'. It must be recognized and always remembered when we attempt to judge the frame of

mind of Italians under Fascism, that the Press, posters, demonstrations, inscriptions on walls, and broadcasts had perhaps the largest share in inculcating the 'Fascist doctrine and faith' in large numbers of people; and what merit can be claimed for that is to be ascribed very largely to the Ministry of Popular Culture.

## Chapter Seven

### FASCISM AND THE TEACHERS

THE intellectuals were considered by most Fascist leaders as the anti-Fascists *par excellence*. It is not easy in Italy to suppress freedom of speech completely; and many intellectuals went on speaking their minds more or less openly in spite of prohibitions. Even when they were reduced to silence, this silence was a clear protest. The Party and the Government used many different methods to bring into line the teachers, who were the most important of the intellectuals for the 'Fascistization' of youth. These methods ranged from the proclamation of the new doctrine to the basest threats and individual persecution. In general, however, a systematic attack was launched attracting or forcing the teachers into complete subjection to the Duce and Party. The results were never satisfactory from a Fascist point of view, although vast sections of the elementary-school teachers and a large number of the others became active or passive supporters of the régime.

On the occasion of the *Natale di Roma*, 21 April 1925, the Government gave the utmost publicity to a manifesto of the Fascist intellectuals. The leading idea was that Italian culture must be a Fascist culture, at the service of the régime. Those intellectuals who intended to uphold a non-Fascist culture were stigmatized as traitors to their country and to truth. A counter-manifesto was soon written by Croce, and signed by hundreds of intellectuals from all parties and circles, most of them teachers in universities and secondary schools. It was a kind of mass protest by the highest representatives of Italian culture, not so much against Fascism, which did not mean very much yet to culture, but against this attempt at enslaving truth to a Party. The counter-manifesto contained statements like this: 'The intellectuals . . . have as citizens the right, and fulfil the duty, of joining and faithfully serving a party; but as intellectuals their only duty is to bring all men of all parties to a higher spiritual level, so that all may fight the inevitable battles with ever more beneficial results. This is the real aim of their researches, mutual criticism, and artistic creations. When these boundaries are crossed and politics are contaminated with literature and scholarship with politics in order that violence, arrogance, and suppression of freedom may be patronized by those activities, it is not

even possible to speak of a generous mistake. . . . The Fascist intellectuals seem to assume that the Italians are experiencing a religious war waged in the name of a new gospel against an old superstition. . . . This so-called religion is nothing but 'hatred and rancour kindled by a party that denies to its opposers even the name of Italians. . . . We do not feel inclined to abandon our old faith, which has been the very life of modern, resurgent Italy for two and a half centuries. In this faith are welded together love of truth, desire of justice, generosity towards men and civilization, zeal for intellectual and moral education, care for freedom, and a guarantee of all real progress. . . .' The 'manifesto of the Fascist intellectuals' was soon forgotten, but the other manifesto remained as a title of shame, in the Fascists' eyes, for all the signatories. *Firmatario del manifesto* remained as a typical phrase to classify a number of university professors who had their careers partly obstructed by this *faute de jeunesse*. Most of them were later refused permission to join the Party, even if they had become converted to the extent usually required for this step; and they had more difficulty than others in getting special appointments.

Persecution of teachers rarely assumed a violent form. The power given to the Minister to relieve inefficient officials of their posts may have been used in some cases with a view to getting rid of political enemies of the régime; but it was necessary to pass other decrees in 1926 and 1928 in order to allow the dismissal of teachers from secondary and elementary schools on political grounds. The pressure brought to bear on some prominent professors by the political authority, especially through the 'legal' action of the *Tribunale Speciale*, increased the number of victims. Among these were the well-known historians Gaetano Salvemini and Guglielmo Ferrero, and the economist Carlo Rosselli, who became exiles in Great Britain, Switzerland, and France. Rosselli who had been put on trial in Italy and escaped after being condemned, was later killed near Paris, apparently on orders from the Fascist Party. Augusto Monti, who had long been an upholder of school reforms, Piero Gobetti, a young and promising historian and politician, and the economist Ricci had to leave their posts in schools on account of their disagreement with the régime.

The pressure exercised by the Party and its organizations on the teachers, especially in the elementary schools, started with invitations, direct or, through the ministry, to help the work of the O.N.B., *Avanguardie*, and O.N.D. Special honours were bestowed on teachers and headmasters who had deserved well of these organizations; and from 1928 it was emphasized that this



was a title of preference for better appointments and rapid advancement. The merit of making the pressure effective was very much that of the Supervisors of Studies, who, working on instructions or on their own initiative, collaborated as much as possible with the political authorities. By far the most effective method for conquering the teaching class was gradually to exclude from this profession all those who did not give definite guarantees of Fascist faith. In 1927 it was decided that candidates for university appointments should be accepted only if they had a 'correct moral and political behaviour'. In 1930 the confirmation of the *venia legendi* to the private teachers was made subject to information on their political attitude. In 1932 the fact of belonging to the Fascist Party was legally considered a preferential title for appointments to schools. Finally, in 1933 a decree was passed according to which an essential condition for admission to any kind of regular post in the State administration was membership of the Fascist Party.

This last measure was not sufficient to bring about even a superficial 'Fascistization' of the whole body of teachers. Many of those who had been appointed before 1933 kept their independence. No sweeping order came for all to decide whether they preferred to become Fascists or to go. But the threat that this might soon be the case had the effect of making the large majority of teachers enter the Party whenever possible. The need for teachers may have dictated this policy of incomplete compulsion. On the other hand there was always present in Fascism, side by side with the tendency to become an organization embracing all Italians, the opposite tendency of considering the Party as an *élite*. This accounted for the 'shutting of doors', which several times prevented anyone from entering the Party except from the youth organizations. For the same reasons special favours were given to the Fascists *pre-marcia* (those who had belonged to the Party uninterruptedly since the time before the March on Rome) and especially to the *Sansepolcristi* (the few who had founded with Mussolini the first *Fascio* at the meeting of Piazza San Sepolcro, Milan). Since 1932 these privileged 'pioneers' had been allowed to take part in some competitions even if they lacked the proper qualifications. From 1934 to 1938 a series of decrees was issued extending to them the many privileges previously enjoyed only by former soldiers of the World War.

Apart from the teachers appointed before 1933, the supplementary teachers were not requested to be members of the Party; but the headmasters and Supervisors had to inform the Minister as soon as possible about their political attitude. A few years later, however, even this loophole for young non-Fascist

teachers was stopped. So it came about that all new recruits to teaching, except only the priests, were members of the Party. This meant that they had taken an oath of allegiance to the Duce, whose orders they swore to follow even unto death. In practice, it meant that they must wear uniform on special occasions, wear the Party badge always, attend the meetings and processions to which they were summoned, and feel a moral obligation to spread the spirit of Fascism in the schools. Moreover, they had to submit to Party discipline, which was very capricious. Justice in this kind of discipline was very often at the mercy of individual temperaments and ambitions. The punishment that could be inflicted by the Party, without any interference of the Government, was the withdrawal of the membership card, or a temporary suspension from Party activities. The former punishment was very serious because it prevented the victim from applying for any new post. In some cases it led to dismissal, as in the case of a young scholar, Vittorio Enzo Alfieri, teacher in the Lyceums.

The elementary schools have been more subject to pressure than the other schools. The strong link which was created between them and the O.N.B. had its effect on the teachers. It was not only necessary for them to be members of the Party; it became more and more essential that they should take an active part in all activities of the O.N.B. The aim was to identify the two things, school and political organization: the teachers were urged to join the O.N.B. as officers and local leaders. This gave a larger scope for their activity, and a better opportunity for improving their financial position. Especially in smaller places and villages, it became practically inconceivable that the elementary teachers should not be at the same time the officers in charge of the youth organizations. And this was even more the case with teachers of the rural schools when they passed under the total control of the O.N.B.

In the universities the approach was not always easy. The number of people who had very definite views against the régime was such that it was not possible to dismiss them all; and it was obvious that a mass conversion would have hardly any effect. Moreover, the choice of new professors for vacancies was largely in the hands of the older professors, who might take into consideration scientific much more than political qualifications. The required membership of the Party did not mean very much, and it was regarded by most people as a formality with very little binding force on the conscience of the *tesserato*; the *tessera* was one of the many documents which Italians were accustomed to enclose with any application for a post. It was therefore thought

proper to force the university professors to a public and solemn declaration of allegiance to the régime. In 1930 the oath was imposed on them, as a delayed application of a provision of the decree of 1923 for the reform of universities, according to which all officials must swear allegiance to the Crown and obedience to the laws of the State. Nobody would have objected to such an oath if the formula had not included the pledge of loyalty to the Fascist régime. The principle of a 'Party truth' upheld in the 'Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals', which had been rejected by the *firmatari*, became now the main point of the university professors' oath. This was felt by very many, even Fascist, professors, as an offence to their dignity and to the dignity of science. Protests were made in all quarters. It is known that in some cases the Minister of Education, if not Mussolini himself, had to intervene to 'persuade' professors to take the oath. The consequence of a refusal was dismissal, and many were frightened by the spectre of unemployment; others thought that it was better to make a compromise, *volendo e disvolendo*, swearing and protesting at the same time. Those who stood firm and preferred to retire were a very tiny minority, eleven in all. But this number included personalities whose refusal in the eyes of thoughtful people was a judgement and a condemnation of the insulting oppression of learning. The greatest living Italian historian of Greece and Rome, Gaetano De Sanctis, the mathematician Vito Volterra, and the historian of art Lionello Venturi were among them; their action was admired and perhaps envied by many of their colleagues, no voice being heard against them as 'traitors to their country and to truth', as they were styled in advance in the Fascist manifesto. The effect of the oath was considerable. Whether they were converted or thought it necessary to feign conversion, quite a number of university professors acted as Fascists after the oath. Others did not hide their shame at their weakness, and felt embarrassed in their relations with colleagues and pupils. In some universities at least there was, immediately after 1930, an atmosphere of moral depression.

Appointments to the posts of head of the university (*Rettore*) and dean of each Faculty (*Preside*), were reserved from 1930 for members of the Party. The appointment to vacancies for professors was made more and more dependent on the *anzianità* (seniority) *di tessera* and on all merits acquired in the political field. Young candidates for a university career were encouraged to pay as much attention to political activity as to their studies. Much more than in the secondary schools, there were frequent denunciations and threats from the party authorities, or the *Rettori* themselves, against professors not keen enough in their

political duties or openly opposed to the Party and Government. Cases were not rare of aspirants to a post making accusations of anti-Fascism against the holder in order to get him removed. Such accusations put in danger even Lombardo-Radice, who was denounced to the Minister for 'betraying his oath of loyalty to the régime'. In every university espionage organized by the Party organizations in agreement with the *Rettori* was in later years very efficient. Professors were summoned by the *Rettori* and threatened with 'political' measures for having uttered unorthodox words, heard and reported by students or other people. Compulsory attendance at Party meetings, the wearing of uniforms and Party badges, and the often unavoidable participation in politico-cultural activities made many professors appear outwardly much more Fascist than they were and led them either into an unpleasant double life, or into a cynical acceptance of what they hated. The habit of distorting ideas and dissimulating convictions took hold of the weaker individuals, and consequently made students lose faith in them. In these circumstances it is the more remarkable that the general attitude of the professors in several universities was still opposed to extreme Fascist ideas, and that even among the younger many preserved the uncompromising devotion to learning which they had learnt from their elders. There was, it is true, among all the younger ones, the compromise of party membership and the oath of allegiance to the régime; and there were only a few who preferred to give up their hopes of a university position in order to avoid these compromises. But it was accepted as a necessity even by the most independent advisers of youth, such as Croce or some Catholic personalities, that it was better to submit to such 'formalities' than to leave the universities completely in the hands of the 'arrivists'.

A review of the political attitude of teachers in universities would show all shades from extreme *squadrist* Fascism to extreme anti-Fascism. Fascism was represented, especially in the faculties of Law and Political Sciences, either by a number of young recruits who had absorbed from their new education all the imperialistic and totalitarian myths, or by such persons as Gentile, Codignola, and the economist De Stefani, who had an established fame and thought they were shaping Fascism with their ideas or, finally, by persons who had been appointed on account of their Fascist faith, including such pioneers of the new culture as Giuseppe Bottai. Others, who had been professors before Fascism, or had been chosen in a 'political' way, faithfully obeyed orders from the authorities and, with or without enthusiasm, upheld the legality of the Government-Party

system. The great improvements which were brought about in laboratories, libraries, and buildings in consequence of Gentile's reform made Fascism popular in many circles of the faculties of Medicine, Science, and Engineering. The great majority of professors, however, had a passive attitude to public life, and made it clear privately that they accepted the political situation only to be able to carry on their work. Some of them carried on cultural activities which were in contrast with Fascism, although not openly opposed to actual political measures. A small minority constantly maintained an attitude of opposition in spite of the danger of dismissal or even prosecution and imprisonment.

Compared with the legal compulsion of being a member of the Party in order to get new appointments, the position of inferiority in which non-Fascists were put in many circumstances, and the moral pressure accompanying the oath, the effect on teachers of the Fascist organizations specially meant for them was of small importance. The various sections of the *Associazione Fascista della Scuola* (A.F.S.) exerted influence only in as much as they took the place of other free organizations of teachers. They had very few activities, and did not encourage any serious discussion of educational problems. The pressure brought to bear on teachers to join these associations was quite strong in the years just before the war. It was the least sign of allegiance to the régime which one could expect from teachers; refusal to belong even to the A.F.S. almost amounted to a public declaration of opposition. This organization was one of the associations of State officials, the only one open to them since they were forbidden to belong to trade unions, as they were not considered to be employees but dependants bound by an oath of allegiance. The private teachers had their trade unions in the framework of the 'syndicate of the intellectuals'. In principle the annual contribution to the syndicate, if not the actual membership, was required of anybody wanting to teach privately in any capacity. This principle, however, had not been applied on a big scale when war broke out.

The effect on teachers of the political evolution and of educational policy cannot be easily assessed. It seems, however, that the elementary-school teachers responded much more than the others to the call for 'Fascistization'. Through them and in consequence of measures already described and those to be described presently, the great majority of elementary schools became real centres of Fascist education in the ten years preceding the war. In the secondary schools this was true only to a much smaller extent. Teachers, whether members or not of the Fascist Party (and of course almost all of them had become

members), were much more independent, the greater part of them having lost all interest in politics, or having made a point of avoiding all topics which might show their attitude. In some towns or schools, however, the choice of teachers was made with a view to their 'Fascist faith'; for instance in Rome secondary schools might in many cases appear totally 'Fascistized'. In the universities, the position varied from university to university, and from Faculty to Faculty. On the whole, the process of 'Fascistization' was far from complete, and the political authorities were always ready to accuse the university professors as a class of being the main centre of reaction against Fascism.

Under the surface of uniforms and badges much of the old liberalism was still alive; but there was perhaps much more dissatisfaction than readiness to look for remedies.

## Chapter Eight

### 'FASCISTIZED' CURRICULA AND TEXT-BOOKS

THE infiltration of Fascism in the schools was not so great in the actual teaching as it was through the more or less compulsory membership of youth organizations. The influence of Fascism was, however, very strong even in this field in the elementary schools, especially through the *Libro di Stato* (State book). In the secondary schools both curricula and educational books had to adapt themselves to a certain extent to the Fascist ideology. In the universities the changes in this direction were very slight and limited on the whole to a few subjects in some Faculties. The idea of new types of schools, completely Fascist, materialized in very few instances.

The Fascist achievements in the creation of thoroughjhy Fascist new schools have already been mentioned in connexion with physical education. The Academy of the Farnesina and that of Orvieto, for boys and girls respectively, were the seminaries, as it were, of the new cult of physical efficiency and military sense of duty in civilian life. Few other Fascist schools were set up, and none had a real vitality based on the new elements brought by Fascism into education. The elementary schools dependent on the O.N.B. were not new, but were the rural schools reorganized and temporarily put under the control of this body. As regards secondary schools, some attempts were made to set up private institutions controlled directly by the G.I.L., but they were short-lived. It was difficult to give them a completely new character, so long as the pupils had in the end to pass the same examinations as those of the other schools. The so-called *scuole sindacali* were courses of day or evening lectures rather than proper schools, and in the few places in which they existed they took the place of other courses which used to be organized by the *Università Popolari* and similar bodies. The same can be said of the *Scuole del Dopolavoro*. In the higher order of schools, the new universities that were founded were on the traditional pattern. There was, however, a move towards the institution of new Faculties and schools of political science and statistics. The Fascist Faculty of Political Science in the University of Perugia, founded in 1928, was meant to be the model for the other Faculties of Political Science founded in several universities. These Faculties were to train people pre-

pared to handle political matters according to Fascist ideas, a kind of new ruling class, of which Fascism was in great need. But even these faculties were subject to the usual rules of universities; no really independent Fascist university came into being, a thing which is significant if one considers that the only university with an independent ideological character which prospered in these times was the Catholic University of Milan.

Fascist teaching in the form of new items compulsorily introduced into the curricula of the several schools, consisted mainly of two new subjects: 'Fascist Culture' and 'Corporative Law'. The first was rather vaguely defined. For a long time after it was 'recommended' as a supplementary subject in all schools, and then made an essential part of courses in history or other subjects, the teachers themselves found it difficult to give that name substance. Finally, 'Fascist Culture' established itself as a compound of several elements: history of the 'decadence' of Italy before the First World War, and the revival brought by the pre-Fascists (Crispi, Oriani, d'Annunzio, etc.) and by Fascists; the organization of the Fascist Party and other Fascist institutions; and the new ideologies (Rome, Empire, moral and material primacy of the Italian people over other peoples, etc.). This teaching of 'Fascist Culture' remained as a sign of the impossibility of transforming culture into something purely Fascist. It was realized that there could not be two cultures side by side, and it was continually emphasized in circular letters from the Minister of Education that the Fascist attitude must be kept in evidence in the teaching of all subjects. On the other hand an attempt was made to give strength to this 'Fascist Culture' as an important by-product of culture. It never became a 'subject' in the technical sense, with a special teacher for it and with special examinations. Pupils were never worried by the study of 'Fascist Culture'; and being worried is the first sign of the importance assigned to a subject in Italian schools.

The Fascist doctrine of corporations and syndicates had been given a form more clearly defined than other points of the new ideology. In spite of its practical shortcomings, it had been developed into a systematic theory which could be taught as a special subject. Soon after the Charter of Labour was published, the teaching of Corporative Law was introduced not only in those schools where economic subjects were taught, but in practically all schools, including the elementary. In those schools where political economy was studied, as in the Lyceum, this subject was more and more reduced to the new Corporative Law. The various doctrines of political economy were taught summarily as past failures which had found their remedy in the new



Fascist doctrine of corporations. The system which, in the mind of theoreticians like Bottai, was to have ruled Italian life after a few years, was taught as something already in existence, or very near to realization. The principles of national economy, autarky, equilibrium between the social classes through the syndicates, co-ordination of all economic activities through the corporations, and solidarity in accepting the supreme power of the State were being taught as *the* science of politics and economy. In 1928 a volume was published under the patronage of the Ministry of Corporations for the secondary schools, in which the Elements of Corporative Law were expounded in a 'wise, clear and honest way', as Mussolini and Bottai wrote in the introductory letters. The two hundred large pages of this book gave such an extensive treatment of the matter, that if they had really to be studied in the way Bottai, the editor, wished, the Corporative Law would have become the principal subject in all schools in which that book was adopted. But the time allotted to this study was so restricted that this was not possible. On the other hand the teachers (very often they were the teachers of philosophy and history) felt that this doctrine was still so much out of touch with real life in many of its points that they did not attach great importance to it. It is, however, through the teaching of Corporative Law that many students of secondary schools acquired the few ideas they have of social organization, class policy, and national economic problems. The influence of this teaching in giving a sense of the needs of the country and of a co-ordinated effort to improve the material conditions of life, and consequently in justifying extreme measures to solve the difficult problems of poverty and over-population, may have been deeper than that of the vague Fascist Culture. In the universities the name of the chair of *Economia Politica* was changed into that of *Economia Corporativa*, or *Economia Corporativa e Sindacale*. A special school for 'corporative' studies was annexed to the Faculty of Laws in Turin.

The curricula of other subjects had to be adapted to some extent to Fascist ideas. This applied mainly to the curricula of history, and in a lesser degree to those of philosophy, Italian literature, and geography. Roman history, and especially the history of the growth of the Roman Empire and of the greatest figures, like Caesar and Augustus, became much more than before *the* ancient history. Modern history, especially the history of the nineteenth century, became a prelude to the glories of the present times. The part taken by Italy in the progress of civilization became more than ever the essence of history. Still, it cannot be said that the curricula as they were revised between 1923

and 1936 confined the teaching of history to the strictly nationalist point of view. There was some revision but it did not transform the whole plan of the teaching of history. Only in the curricula for the lower forms was this almost true; in the curricula of the Lyceum and Higher Training College for Teachers foreign history still had a large share. The difficulty of finding a philosophy or a philosophical tradition which could be safely applied to Fascism made it impossible to suggest a special choice of authors to be read in order to lead the student to an appreciation of the Fascist doctrine. The course adopted was merely to cross out from the lists of authors some names which sounded too 'anti-Fascist', such as that of Croce, and to make the study of Mussolini's *Dottrina del Fascismo* compulsory for every student as the conclusion of his study of philosophy and the history of philosophy. The very low philosophical value of this writing, and the fact that it is so strictly linked to Gentile's theory (if indeed it was not written by Gentile himself) which was losing popularity among teachers, will account for the lack of influence of the philosophical teaching of Fascism among young people.

Some of the leading Fascists, such as Mussolini himself and Italo Balbo, were raised to the rank of 'authors' to be studied in Italian literature. The account by Balbo of his flight in formation over the Atlantic was one of the set books in many schools for boys of fourteen to sixteen. Mussolini's speeches had to be read in the higher forms of secondary schools, side by side with, or instead of, Mazzini's and Gioberti's writings or Carducci's, Pascoli's, and d'Annunzio's prose and verse. Here, again, the part allotted to Fascist writers was very small in comparison with that allotted to all those of the past, although it was much greater than their literary value deserved. In the study of geography the factors which were alleged to have brought Italy to 'need' Fascism and an empire were required to be emphasized, not only when dealing with Italy itself, but also when considering the resources of other countries.

The check on educational books was at least as important for Fascism as the check on the political attitude of the teachers. Half of the 'school life' of pupils was spent studying at home. All too often the teachers just gave them so many pages to study, and tried to check up afterwards if the work assigned had been done. There used to be in Italy the utmost freedom for the publication of educational books. There were laws empowering the State to exercise a certain censorship, but they were hardly ever applied. In the first years after Gentile's reform, elementary-school books had to be approved by a special ministerial commission. The reports published by the commissions show

how hard their work was, as there was no restriction on the publication of educational books. The judgement and suggestions of the commissions were given almost exclusively for pedagogic reasons; very little, if any, political bias could be found in the years from 1923 to 1927. In this year the campaign for the Fascistization of elementary-school books began. A member of the O.N.B. was from that year onwards to be appointed to the committee for the revision of books. In the spring of 1928 an order was issued that the elementary-school books would be prohibited if they did not 'adhere' to the spirit of Fascism. A few months later a 'National Song Book' was issued under the patronage of the political and State authorities, for use in all elementary schools in Italy. It included a number of religious tunes and the most popular patriotic songs. Its Fascist character is shown by the presence of the 'Balilla Song' and of *Giovinetza*. This 'National Song Book' can be considered as an experiment in the 'State book', a book to be used to the exclusion of all others in the schools of the whole country. In December of the same year the Chamber of Deputies approved unanimously, as was the fashion, the proposal of having State books for all forms of the elementary schools. This was the most drastic step in the field of education taken by Fascism after the foundation of the O.N.B. The State books, written by Fascist authors, chosen by a Fascist Committee, imposed with the stroke of a pen on millions of children, struck a powerful blow at the principle of freedom of teaching upheld by the reform of 1923. It did not prove very easy to provide 'good' State books. The competition between writers was rather in the attempt to put more Fascism in the books than to provide books adapted to the age and different *milieux* of the young students. These and other reasons, mainly of a commercial kind, caused frequent changes in the State books. There were a few books written by really good writers who knew what children and teachers needed. But even in these, the political bias was very evident.

An idea of these State books may be given by a short description of two of them. The 'Book for Class I' published as all the others by the State Library has, in its edition of the *Anno XVII*, i.e., of 1938-39, a cover showing two children, a boy and a girl, on their way to school, wearing their uniforms of 'Wolf-cub' and *Piccola Italiana*. Page 5, the first meant for the children, has another picture, a 'Wolf-cub' holding an Italian flag. Among the illustrations accompanying the vowels we have an aeroplane with the national colours (*ae* for *aeroplano*.) The first word the child can spell after learning the vowels is *Eia* (the war cry adopted by Fascism); and it is illustrated by the emblem

of the *Fascio Littorio*. Pages 14 and 15 are the first pages showing the compromise between the two religions; on page 14 there is a Madonna and the words 'Mary! Let us love Mary'; on page 15 the same picture as on page 5, showing the 'Wolf-cub' with the flag, is accompanied by the words *Mario è uomo* ('Mario is a man'); under him is a Roman arch with the legend *Roma. A Roma! Eroi, a Roma!* ('Heroes, to Rome!') On page 21 a 'Wolf-cub' is looking at a map of Italy; underneath there are the words: 'My country, I love you. All of us love you. Heroes and martyrs, you deserve love!' On page 25 three children in uniform raise their hands in the Roman salute: *A noi!* (another Fascist cry). 'Let us sing a hymn: the hymn to Rome. Rome, Rome, we all admire and love thee.' Among family and country scenes, pictures of ships, aeroplanes, soldiers, and demonstrating crowds are prominent everywhere. The picture of the King and Queen are soon followed by that of Mussolini: 'Children, love Benito Mussolini. Benito Mussolini worked and always works for the good of our country and people. You have often heard your father, mother, and teacher saying: If Italy is now much more powerful than before, we owe it to him. Let us salute him all together. *A noi!*' Then follows the children's hero, Balilla, shown as he is throwing his stone, and the story of his feat. 'Benito Mussolini gave all Italian children the name of Balilla. All children must be as bold, good, and patriotic as Balilla was.' A picture of Mussolini kissing a Balilla (page 76) is followed by the 'declaration of love' to him by the children: 'Duce, Duce, you are so good with children, and they love you with all their hearts. You are to them like a father, you make them strong and courageous, you render them happy. Long live the Duce of Italy!' The following page shows boys of various ages in their several uniforms: 'Small Black Shirts, you are the future of our country. Strong Black Shirts, you are the defence of our country.' The *Piccole Italiane* of page 81 'shall become the true Italian women, courageous and proud, because they have promised so to the Duce'. After the Mass celebrated at a Balilla camp, the children pray, 'Good Jesus, protect our Country! Make it always victorious, great and powerful. Protect our King, simple and strong, and our Duce, generous and courageous, who guides Italy so wisely and righteously!' Of the many Fascist stories (including the latest news of the conquest, hard and glorious, of Abyssinia, page 60), one is specially meant for the pupil, the 'Wolf-cub'. He has just learnt how to pronounce the group of letters *gli*, and it is right for him to practise in it with the words *battaglia*, *mitraglia* (battle, machine-gun); these follow, as a conclusion, the short tale of the 'Wolf-cub' Guglielmo, who, wearing his

brand-new uniform, tells his father that he too is a small soldier of the Duce, that he will have his rifle, and do all that the soldiers do and win many medals. The father likes the *voglio's* (I will) of the child, but says that first of all a true soldier of the Duce must obey. The book finishes with a poem, *A feast day*:

*Cantano i bimbi: dicono l'amore  
Per te, Italia! dicon la tua gloria,  
E cantano di guerra e di vittoria.*

('The children sing: they speak their love to you, Italy! They speak of your glory, and sing of war and victory.')

The 'Book for Class II' shows on the cover the 'Wolf-cub' with his rifle in the right hand and a book in the left. From the first page, in which the children will read a quotation by Mussolini on *L'Italiano nuovo*, to the last where 'the book is over, but the new Italian does not stop; he goes on marching with his iron will, ready to conquer every day', there is hardly a page from which Fascism is absent. There are stories of the Abyssinian War, quotations from the law 'of the Empire', tales and pictures of Balillas and soldiers, accounts of the great achievements of Fascism, from the *Battaglia del Grano* to the draining of the Pontine Marshes. The names of children are very often the 'sacred names' of the Mussolinis: Sandro, Vittorio, Romano, Bruno, and Rosa. The two *motifs* which run all through the book are those of war and the Duce. 'For the Fascist there is always war; because war is the guarantee of peace.' (p. 164.) 'It is not necessary to be old in order to pilot an aeroplane and to fight; yes, to fight too; in East Africa one could see children under eighteen fighting like heroes.' (p. 156). 'Rome marches again towards her destiny. . . . It was Mussolini's will, and his dream is already materializing.' (p. 7.) The small deaf and dumb Giuliano was first able to hear something when the Duce proclaimed the foundation of the Empire, and was able to answer 'yes' to the Duce's words; and then tried to say 'Du-ce Du-ce'. (pp. 141-44.)

All the books for the five forms of the elementary schools were written in the same spirit. And no school, public or private, was allowed to use any book other than those issued by the State. The principle of uniformity was broken only by producing special editions for rural schools, and in a few other cases; but no exception was allowed to the State control of all elementary school books. Suggestions were made for the publication of State books for the post-elementary schools also (*Scuole di Avviamento*); but they do not seem to have materialized. In the secondary schools the freedom of publishing and adopting educa-

tional books was only partially restricted. No State books were issued; and the Ministers in charge were careful to repeat often that they had no such intentions. The only exception was the issue of a manual for military instruction; and even that, it was stated, was only temporary. One might consider as another exception the compulsory adoption of Mussolini's *Dottrina del Fascismo*, although it could be published and commented upon by anybody in any form. It was however natural for the Government and the Party to try to encourage books written in the Fascist spirit, and to prevent those clearly 'unsuitable to the new climate' from falling into the hands of students. In January 1929 an order was issued that all books used in schools must be 'adherents of the Fascist spirit'; and very soon a number of books, especially history books, were condemned as unorthodox. The immediate consequence of these measures was that several authors of school books tried to be as Fascist as possible, and many teachers were inclined to avoid this or that book, in order not to be accused of favouring non-Fascist books. This infiltration of Fascism was noticeable not only in books of history, economics, geography, and anthologies of Italian literature, but even in Latin grammar books and texts of mathematics, where examples and exercises were often 'inspired' by Fascism. The effect of Fascism on the average school books must not, however, be exaggerated. It is noteworthy that a great number of them remained almost unaffected by the new tendency. And this is most noticeable in history books in which the sense of proportion between the past and present is clearly kept, as, to quote just one example, in Lemmi's *Storia Contemporanea* for the Lyceums.

Among other measures taken to 'Fascistize' the schools an order must be mentioned for the removal from school libraries (students' sections) of books unsuitable for a Fascist education. The usual methods of propaganda were used to influence pupils and teachers at school. Lectures on political subjects were ordered to be held frequently, especially as the commemoration of important events. Whether it was the anniversary of the pre-Fascist Alfredo Oriani, or of George Washington (at a time in which it suited to fraternize with America), or of Guglielmo Marconi, or of the March on Rome, all students had to attend a meeting and listen to speeches. The wireless was being used more and more for propaganda purposes in schools. From 1935 onwards there were a number of schools in which every classroom had its loudspeaker to be tuned-in for 'important announcements' or for speeches by Mussolini and other Ministers. Posters for naval and air propaganda were put up in schools from 1929 onwards; in the same year schools were asked to help

in fighting against the 'desertion of the land for the towns'. The number of these interruptions of school work by propaganda as well as interruptions from the youth organizations of the Party were such that the regular routine essential to teachers and pupils was perpetually disturbed. The idea that life, and Fascist life, must enter into the schools from all doors and windows, was becoming more true every day; not, however, in such a way as to give a new moral and intellectual order to the students, but rather to distract them and diminish their faith in schools.

## Chapter Nine

### TOTALITARIANISM IN THE SCHOOLS: DE VECCHI

THE part played by the State in the schools from 1859 onwards was such that any Government wanting to exercise full control in education might have done so by applying the existing laws more strictly than any of the pre-Fascist Governments ever did. What was really liberal in Italian education was the character of the people and the mood of the time. Gentile's reform claimed to bring about freedom for teachers and pupils. It has been pointed out in previous chapters that the reform, while undoubtedly providing for more freedom, reasserted the principle of State control in new forms, e.g., the State examinations; even the fight against bureaucracy and the reduction of the number of Supervisors helped to enforce a stricter State grip on educational activities. After Gentile, the two *motifs* of freedom and State control developed side by side for a few years, while, on the other hand, Party control entered as a third element in shaping education. The Party aimed at taking the place of all other bodies, collective or individual, which exercised a certain freedom in education. And the State, in connexion with the Party, applied its power more and more in order to bring the schools into line with the new or changing general policy.

There are two sets of facts that have to be considered here: first, measures affecting the schools and reflecting the policies of the Fascist Government in fields other than educational; and second, the thorough revision of the whole matter of education, and especially of the administrative machinery, by which the Minister de Vecchi tightened State control over the schools and applied in his own sphere the principles of dictatorship. Both groups of facts constituted an open challenge to the reform of 1923; its spirit and many of its provisions were quickly disappearing. The idea of a 'perpetual revolution' and of continuous *superamenti* took revenge on its Fascist upholder, Gentile.

The general principle that all must be controlled by the State is responsible for the multiplication of State schools, the taking over of private institutions, the granting of the privilege of *pareggiata* and *parificata* to a great number of schools, the withdrawal of educational control over elementary schools from local governments, and the institution of a Central Board of Inspectors



(*Ispettorato centrale*) for private schools (whether *pareggiate* or not). The number of secondary schools had been reduced by Gentile by about 10 per cent; the number of classes in many schools had been cut down to the same extent. This and the fact that no more than thirty-five pupils were allowed in each class had reduced the number of students in secondary schools by about 20 per cent in the first years after the reform. Fifteen years afterwards, however, the number of schools was far greater than before the reform, the number of classes in each school was no more limited, and the number of students was larger than ever before, out of all proportion to the growth of the population. The *regificazione*, *pareggiamento*, *parificazione* brought under State-ownership or State-control hundreds of schools previously private; the pace of transformation became specially rapid in the years from 1933 onwards. In 1928 the *Ispettorato generale per gli Istituti di Educazione e Scuole Pareggiate e Private* was founded in order that a stricter watch might be exercised on all such schools.

The drive to rally all Italians or sons of Italians outside the frontiers, one of the steps towards imperialist expansion, brought about the reorganization of the Italian schools abroad and special favours to those who wanted or needed to study in Italy. Italian schools abroad were put on an even more Fascist basis than those in Italy; teachers were specially chosen for their Fascist credentials (although it was not always easy to find such teachers), and their connexion with the *Fasci Italiani all'Estero* was even more real than the connexion of schools in Italy with the Party. Students of Italian origin coming from Tunisia, Dalmatia, the Aegean Islands, and, with some exceptions, those from other countries, were granted free education in secondary schools and universities, according to decrees passed between 1929 and 1933. Military education had been left to the military authorities and to the Party until war became imminent. In February 1935, when the Abyssinian expedition was decided upon, the schools had military education introduced into their programmes. Army officers or retired officers were appointed to give lectures on the history of war, on the organization of armies, and especially of the Italian Army, on the theory of tactics, on the new weapons, and so forth. All male pupils of secondary schools and universities were compelled to attend these courses, and soon to pass examinations in them. The introduction of military education was not an emergency measure; the idea that war is the life of peoples, as Mussolini taught, was to have its due share, not only in international policy, or in all the military or militarized organizations of State and Party; the too pacifist spirit of schools had to be stirred by it.

The social policy of Fascism influenced the schools in several ways. The 'manly' character of the revolution required that men more than women should teach the new generations. The number of male teachers in elementary schools was, in 1923, much smaller than that of women; in secondary schools the number of women teachers was growing very quickly; the day was approaching when even in these schools the women might have been more numerous than the men. Except for the teaching of gymnastics, there was nothing to prevent men teaching in girls' schools and women teaching boys. The problem of elementary-school teachers was solved by encouraging boys to choose that career. All Training Colleges, the majority of which had been reserved for girls, were opened to boys too; and very soon, in 1929, fees for boys were reduced and, in the upper forms, abolished altogether. This, with the slightly improved financial situation of teachers and the possibility of a political career through the O.N.B., attracted thousands of boys; and their number was quickly coming up to that of girls in the Training Colleges. In secondary schools some limitations were put on women teachers. They were not allowed to apply for certain posts, such as teachers of Latin, Greek, Italian, history, and philosophy in Classical and Scientific Lyceums. Later on, in 1933, a decree determined that in all competitions the number of posts might be divided unequally between men and women; and it became even more usual to find only a small proportion of vacancies left open to women.

The 'demographic campaign' for the increase of the birth rate had a twofold effect on school policy. In all schools students belonging to families with seven or more children were allowed free education. Teachers were encouraged to get married by means of family and children's allowances. The most drastic measures in this connexion were taken in 1938 when it was decreed that teachers could not go further in their career, and persons above thirty were not allowed to compete for posts in schools, if they were not married.

The slogan 'Appeal to the masses' was not very widely applied in education. It was not easy, however, to go much further in popularizing the schools in Italy; or, at least, it was not a new policy that was needed; it would have sufficed to continue the policy which had been in existence for sixty years already. The economic situation of Italy was such that for a State which wanted to be 'modern' education could not absorb more of the resources of the country than it already did. Not many people who disapproved of the spendthrift policy in internal and international propaganda and in military enterprises would have used

the money for education. The claims of industry, trade, housing, hospitals, etc., were considered much more important than a more costly educational policy. Although there was no equality of opportunity as regards education, a strictly educational policy would not have changed much. Fees in all State schools were reasonably low; elementary education was free, apart from the cost of books and note-books. Fascism kept this situation very much unchanged; and the changes brought about were, if anything, of a restrictive character. Fees were on the whole slightly increased. Even elementary education was not absolutely free, since every pupil had to 'buy' the official *pagella* (book for the teachers' reports to families), the price of which, although very low, was a disguised form of fee. Post-elementary schools were again theoretically free, but in practice a certain amount had to be paid for 'expenses'. The fees for the different schools were altered in such a way as to attract pupils to the Training Colleges and Technical Institutes. A measure which might have constituted a precedent for a quite new policy of restriction was the introduction of the *numerus clausus* in certain universities and Faculties. The University of Rome was not allowed, from 1938 onwards, to accept more than 15,000 students, and that of Naples more than 10,000; in other universities the numbers were limited for the Faculty of Law. This measure was an attempt to resist the phenomenon of a tremendous increase of students in universities (and in secondary schools as well), due to causes beyond the control of the educational policy of Fascism. It would require perhaps a detailed study of the economic and social structure of Italy as a consequence of the First World War and of Fascism to see what reasons may be attributed for that increase. The *numerus clausus* appears to be, in any case, an emergency measure, not a determined 'aristocratic' policy. University teachers could not cope, especially at examination time, with so many students.

The Charter of Labour of 1927 asserted the principle that the conceptions of 'citizen' and 'worker' coincide (in the broadest sense of those words and in the frame of the unique entity that is the State). The military and Party policy of the Government aimed at persuading the people that the conceptions of 'citizen' and 'soldier' coincide. The material sign of this twofold reduction of individuals to numbers was, in the schools from 1936 onwards, the *Libretto personale per la valutazione dello Stato fisico, etc.* Every pupil was to be given a booklet in which his behaviour, attainments, physical characteristics, and so on, were recorded term after term and year after year by the teachers and the officers of the Party organizations. State, Party, and Corpora-

tion or Syndical authorities would have been then in a position to classify the boy or girl and make the best of him or her in the two great armies of workers and soldiers by which the State lives its super-individual life. This *libretto personale* had, however, not yet come into general usage by 1939.

Some of the measures recorded above belong to the periods between 1935 and 1939 when Cesare Maria de Vecchi and Giuseppe Bottai were Ministers for Education. But these measures were not characteristic of their personal policies. Bottai's own activities will be recorded in Part IV. De Vecchi's work was not as revolutionary as that which his successor meant to carry out, but was very significant of the development of Fascist totalitarianism. In the course of a few months, in 1935, he revised many laws on education with the aim of increasing the power and control of the State, centralizing all responsibilities in the Minister himself, and bringing the organizations of the Party into immediate collaboration with the Ministry. His reform of the Supreme Council of Instruction, the re-institution of the Supervisors of Studies in every province, the sweeping reforms in the universities, the centralization of all control over elementary schools, and his personal intervention in all disciplinary measures regarding teachers and pupils showed a determination to impose the authority of the State wherever any 'leakage of freedom' had been allowed or encouraged by the educational policy of Gentile and his successors. The future historian may perhaps find also that this strong supporter of the Monarchy and of a firm collaboration between State and Church wanted to assert the importance of stable laws to the exclusion of elastic and mutable Party politics. In this light the appointment of the more socialistically minded Bottai may appear to be the result of competitive strife between two Fascist tendencies.

The highest advisory body of the Ministry of Education, the Supreme Council, was reorganized in June 1935. The main alteration was that in future the Secretary of the Fascist Party, the President of the O.N.B., and the President of the National Confederation of Intellectuals were to become members of the council in their own right. This meant that the voices of these organizations were to be heard in the highest place where decisions on education were taken; but the decision remained with the Minister. The dignity bestowed upon the heads of the Party, O.N.B., and the Confederation, had perhaps to be paid for by the surrender of some of their initiative or independence. It was one step in the process of absorption of the Party, etc., into the State, in the transformation from perpetual revolution based on the 'dual system' into a settled absolutism of the monarchical State.

At the same time a decree was passed empowering the Minister to issue such orders as might seem necessary for an 'organic concentration of the institutions of higher education'. The result of this authority granted to the Minister was the new reform of the universities of December 1935, which did away with the principle of freedom of teaching. A plan was worked out, to which all universities had to submit. All subjects that could be taught in the universities were decided upon by the Minister and included in a list which the Minister himself, but not the universities, could change when the 'need of national culture' might require it. The universities could ask to have this or that subject included in the list to be introduced in their curricula, but it was to be the Minister who decided whether the introduction was advisable or not. Moreover, the plan laid down strict rules as to what subjects were indispensable for students of any university in order to attain the different degrees; the number of free subjects was determined in detail, so that the choice granted to each student was very limited.

In this new plan for higher education, all universities, special schools and institutions were put on one plane. In principle, not more than one institution for higher education could exist in one town. This meant that all special schools were to become Faculties of the local university. The Higher Commercial Schools became commercial Faculties; the Engineering Schools, and other high technical schools, became Faculties of Engineering etc.; the *Scuole Superiori di Magistero* became Faculties of *Magistero*; and so on. In this way many of the differences in organization were to disappear; the head of the university, e.g., of Rome, was to have control over institutions which had been previously supervised by four or more heads of higher schools; and the Minister was to keep in touch with the whole field of superior education through a much smaller number of responsible persons. The merging of the various institutions for higher education existing in the same town was started at the beginning of 1936 and was nearly completed in the same year.

In October 1935 the Minister abolished with a stroke of the pen all the autonomy still left to the Supervisors of Studies as regards elementary education. The institution of new schools or classes, inspections, and the choice of teachers had till then remained largely with the Supervisors, who acted in their own name and under their own responsibility. The new order determined that 'all powers hitherto held by the Supervisors are henceforth held by the Minister, who can delegate other persons to act in his name in those matters in which he thinks it advisable to deal through other people'. Although most matters which

were usually dealt with by the Supervisors were 'delegated' to them by the Minister, so that their work did not change much, their authority was impaired; as became more evident when, in March 1936, their number was multiplied by four, each Supervisor having jurisdiction over only one 'province' (the 'provinces' had in the meantime been increased from seventy-four to about ninety), as before Gentile's reform. The Supervisor again became a small bureaucrat, with the difference that he was now almost a personal servant of the Minister of Education.

The decree regarding discipline, issued in October 1935, was meant to remind every individual in the schools, whether teacher or pupil, that he or she depended on the Minister. Minor punishments for teachers and practically all punishments for pupils were till then meted out by the local educational authorities, i.e., the Supervisors, the headmasters, and the Council of Teachers in each school. Apart from the lightest punishment for pupils, all were to become now the prerogative of the Minister, who could, and did, overrule the opinion of teachers and headmasters, either diminishing or increasing the punishments suggested by them.

All these measures were meant to bring order and discipline into the schools, adapting the pre-Fascist, Gentilian, and revised system of education to the latest developments of the Fascist régime. It might seem that, after fourteen years, Fascism had still found no need for a really sweeping reform of education. But the appointment of Giuseppe Bottai, the Left-wing leader of Fascism, to the Ministry of Education was a sign that something new was in store with regard to the upbringing of the Italian youth.

## IV. THE SCHOOL CHARTER

### *Chapter One*

#### BOTTAI AND EDUCATION

GIUSEPPE BOTTAI, born in 1895, became Minister of Education at the end of 1936. He had been a member of the *Fasci di Combattimento* since their foundation, and was one of the youngest Fascist deputies in Parliament before the March on Rome. His interests were chiefly centred on social questions and he belonged to what may be called the Left Wing of Fascism. Socialist ideals were always present in his mind, and his speeches and actions both bore witness to a constant endeavour to lead Fascism towards a true syndicalism. He had no personal liking for the myths of an imperialism based on military strength and of a hierarchy subservient to the dictator which had appointed it. There are many people who consider that he was an honest defender of the rights of the workers; but it is perhaps an exaggeration to think of him as a martyr who accepted office in an uncongenial system in order to uphold his own ideas as far as possible.

Bottai was entrusted by Mussolini with the task of giving Italy the theoretical and practical foundations of the corporate State; this he did in several ways between 1922 and 1936, and still tried to do in spite of the failures he experienced. He was very active and influential in journalism; his fortnightly *Critica Fascista* was one of the most independent-voices in Italy, and its columns were often filled with most advanced criticism of the official policy; as Minister for Corporations he accepted rather than promoted legislation of a kind that preserved the name of syndicalism but left the class question very much where it was before; as a professor of Corporate Law in the University of Rome, he was much less concerned with scientific teaching than with a kind of propaganda for his socialistic Fascism. It is worth while dwelling a little on the Charter of Labour, which was compiled in 1927 mainly by Bottai, or at least under his supervision, and expressed some opinions that might affect education; moreover, it was the first Fascist 'Charter', on whose model the *Carta della Scuola* (School Charter) was framed.

The Charter of Labour was something more than a Party programme and much less than a legislative bill. It included a number of 'declarations', thirty in all, which were meant to give the basis for all future legislation; it was approved by the Grand

Council of Fascism, and should have become something like a complement to the Statute of the Italian Kingdom. It is true that the 'Grand Council' had hardly any legislative or executive power, and was mainly an advisory body; but since it was supposed to represent the best section of the Italian people (the dominant Fascist 'class'), and included all Ministers, heads of Corporations, the Secretary of the Fascist Party, and other personalities held worthy of the honour, a declaration approved by it should have been safe from failure or suppression.

Some of the 'declarations' contained in the Charter of Labour are particularly relevant to our subject. The first statement reads: 'The Italian Nation is an organism whose aims, life, and means of action are more powerful and lasting than those of its individuals whether or not they are associated among themselves. It is also a moral, political and economic unity fully realized in the Fascist State.' It was therefore the interest of the State, as well as its duty, to care for the moral life of each individual; and individuals were totally subordinated to the State. In the second 'declaration' it is said that 'Work of whatever kind, whether it be the work of an organizer or of a subordinate, whether it be intellectual, technical, or manual in character, is a social duty'; in other words, as has been very often and very demagogically repeated, especially by the followers of Bottai, to be a citizen is to be a worker; and if this principle is adopted, it is a primary duty of the State to inculcate the ideas implied by it, in the minds of all people from their earliest age. According to the eighth 'declaration', 'The representatives of the syndicates of professions and arts and of the associations of civil servants co-operate for the defence of art, science, and letters . . . and for the realization of the moral aims of the corporative State'. This implies that the representatives of the so-called intellectuals should have a say in education. The last 'declaration' concerns the vocational instruction of the members of the syndicates and associations: 'It is one of the main duties of the associations of workers to educate and instruct, especially on the vocational side, those who belong to them; they must support the O.N.D. and the other educational institutions.' The education of adults was, therefore, the task of the syndicates. Almost nothing was done in the twelve years following the publication of the Charter of Labour to bring education into the frame of the corporative State; a decisive step was to be taken by Bottai himself in 1939 through the School Charter.

Bottai was never directly interested in education; what was contained in the Charter of Labour was much theory and little practice. When he became Minister of Education he had to



solve the practical problems, i.e., he had to deal with millions of pupils and tens of thousands of teachers, and with traditions and methods, all of them much less amenable than words and theories. One might say that Bottai the Minister of Education met with the same fate as Bottai the Minister for Corporations; he had in both capacities very broad and rather vague ideals, which he had to match with strong hard facts. His egalitarian syndicalism had to reckon with such things as banks, industrial trusts, land-owners, and deeply rooted habits as regards the distribution of wealth; Mussolini chose that the idealism should remain in the words rather than pass into the facts, or possibly the realities proved more valuable to him than an imposed revolution. The principle that forty-five million Italians should be educated to be worker-atoms of a syndicalist State encountered a culture based on fundamentally different foundations, and a struggle ensued between Fascist militarism and the humanistic order of the schools; only a compromise was possible; and it is too early to say how much Bottai's views have affected education. It is, however, possible to see that the School Charter was still very far from being a really revolutionary step towards the 'Fascist', or better, 'Fascist-Socialist' education.

The first time Bottai expressed his views on education comprehensively was on the occasion of the Parliamentary discussion on the 1937-38 budget of his Ministry. The deputy Zingali, the author of the report on the budget, had emphasized the contribution brought to education by the Party organization and Fascist propaganda. Bottai's answer was very outspoken; he praised, of course, all the Party activities, but pointed out that the task of education lay elsewhere: 'The whole national life,' he said, 'the *Fasci*, the Syndicates, the *Dopolavoro*, the newspapers, the wireless, the sport organizations, and especially the great events of contemporary history . . . educate youth in Fascist political ideas, even if these were not found explicitly or implicitly expressed in the schools'; he considered that an end must, however, be put to all the rhetoric on Fascist ideals, 'because while the country needs engineers the schools produce lawyers, and when it needs jurists only orators are forthcoming'. His criticism went so far as to condemn the whole system of secondary and higher education existing in Italy, which he thought had not been reformed at all by Gentile; the spirit of the *Risorgimento* was still animating secondary education, and this must disappear; everybody wanted to study in the Classical Lyceum, which was the purest expression of the rhetorical trend that presided over the spreading of instruction. The masses entered the secondary schools because this was the necessary

consequence of the highly evolved and specialized character of modern life; but they found the wrong organization; the stress should be put on technical vocational instruction, not on the classics and philosophy. The universities were treated no better by the newly appointed Minister; universities had degenerated inasmuch as they prepared young people to harbour a dishonest conception of professional work as something distinct from learning; the numbers of students were growing, while the attendance at lectures and laboratories was decreasing. He was equally dissatisfied with the little that had been done for pre-elementary education, and with the dualism between the O.N.B. and the schools.

A few days after his speech in the Chamber of Deputies, Bottai spoke in the Senate on the same subject. Here his criticisms were directed mainly towards the muddle in legislation on schools. This was a proof of a state of things lacking in sound principles and order. 'The secondary non-vocational schools are ruled according to the Royal Decree of 6 May 1923; but there are about fifteen new laws and decrees which have brought changes of a substantial nature to that fundamental law. The vocational schools were provided with new regulations as late as 1931, but the personnel is ruled according to decrees of 1923 and 1924 often in contradiction to the later orders.' The post-elementary schools had never been brought completely into line with other scholastic institutions. Military instruction in the schools, although only recently introduced, had to be reorganized.

Bottai had few practical suggestions to make; now that he had to deal with the hard stuff of men and institutions he became very sceptical about reforms or big changes. In a speech at the Chamber of Deputies in March 1938 he joked about the people who looked at the schools from far away and thought only in terms of revolutions and reforms; he professed to have little faith in educational systems, which might be applied well or badly. The tasks he set for himself in 1937 were two; first, to get to know the institutions and the people in them, as he acknowledged himself to be quite ignorant of them; secondly, to unify and simplify the legislation. He said often that no reform was contemplated, and that the *Testi Unici* (unified laws) that he wanted to be ready quickly would not have altered the face of public education. As for his getting acquainted with school people, immediately he became Minister he began to visit as many places as possible; he tried to get in touch with headmasters, teachers, and parents. He showed a keen interest in their views; there was something new in these visits of a Minister less interested in parades than in the real problems of the schools. He tried also to

revive that free participation of the teachers in the discussion of vital questions which had been repressed for fifteen years. He promoted many local meetings to be held under the supervision of the Provincial School Supervisor, in which the different views on the present situation and needs of education were to be freely discussed. The reports of these meetings must have helped him in forming his own opinions. 'If any reforms are needed, they will originate in the school itself, not in an abstract philosophy or pedagogic theory.'

The result of the first year of 'exploration' as Bottai called it was apparently that his dislike for the educational system became stronger and more defined, and that the need for changes seemed to be more urgent than he had thought. The key-note of most of his speeches was that the schools, however 'Fascistized', were not Fascist, but middle-class; in a talk held in 1938 in Cremona he joked on the famous definition of Gentile's reform given by Mussolini—'The reform of the schools is the most Fascist among the reforms'; Bottai said that it could not have been otherwise, because it was the only real reform brought about at the time; but it was not the result of Fascism; in order to be Fascist, reform must see the educational problem as a central problem of politics. Among the many faults which, according to Bottai, had to be remedied, were some which derived directly from the 'most Fascist of reforms'. The Training College had failed to prepare the teachers of elementary schools adequately; if some were good it was a consequence of their ability to exceed the standard. The State examination could not work properly, because good examiners were not to be found in sufficient numbers. The examinations on the whole were wrong, and could be justified only so far as they taught children that life was not, after all, a perpetually easy thing. The distinction between cultural and vocational or technical schools must be fundamental; the ambiguity inherent in the post-elementary schools and in the Lower Technical Institutes must disappear.

On the other hand, not many positive results seem to have counterbalanced this gloomy view. Bottai went on repeating that the schools could be given new life through a stricter collaboration between families and teachers and between the Party organizations and scholastic institutions; he continued insisting that the Corporations had many tasks to fulfil in connexion with education. Two practical ideas which were to find a place later on in the School Charter were shaped at that time; the first, that the lower courses of all the non-vocational secondary schools should be unified into a *Scuola Unica*; the second, that all the boarding-schools, whether belonging to the State (*Convitti*

*Nazionali*), or to other bodies, should be reorganized in order to provide opportunities for a complete secondary education for the children of poorer families, so that the 'better' education might not be reserved for the middle classes. In the meantime, however, most of the steps taken by Bottai closely resembled what had been done in former years. The process of 'Fascistization' of the unsound organism was to go on under Bottai as under his predecessors; the Fascist element which he had to enforce by his decrees was very much the rhetorical propaganda and the imposition of State control on the institutions already in existence, and hardly anything of the 'Socialistic Fascism' which Bottai would have liked to shape the new education.

## Chapter Two

### 'FASCISTIZATION' GOES ON

THE four events of major importance which took place during Bottai's administration before the School Charter was published were: (a) the reform of the youth organizations; (b) the institution of the *Regio Commissariato per le Scuole Rurali* (Royal Commission for Rural Schools); (c) the creation of the *Ente Nazionale per l'Istruzione Media* (E.N.I.M.; later called *Ente Nazionale per l'Istruzione Media e Superiore*, E.N.I.M.S.); and (d) the racial campaign culminating in the exclusion of all Jewish students and teachers from the universities, and from schools not specially reserved for them.

The details of the new organization of youth in the framework of the Fascist Party have been given in a previous chapter. It may be useful to point out here what the change-over from the O.N.B., *Avanguardie*, and other groupings to the G.I.L. may have meant to Bottai, in view of his plans for a new system of education, and to the 'collaboration' between the Party and the Ministry of Education or the schools. For many years the Party organizations had aimed at coming into closer contact with the State management of elementary and secondary schools. In fact the Party had penetrated into the field of physical training and the elementary section of public instruction; many elementary schools had been entrusted to the O.N.B., while the teachers of physical training had to be appointed by the Fascist authorities. This penetration, which had not reached the stage of a unified command, had consequences which have already been pointed out: teachers and headmasters had to submit to a very irregular interference by the Party organizations; students were continually distracted; no regular activities on either side could be carried on, because the plans were not co-ordinated in advance; on the one hand the schools had many rights established by tradition, first of all to arrange their timetables independently of any outside interest, except those of a normal family life; on the other hand the Fascist organizations felt that they were hampered in their work by the monopoly the schools exercised over the time of the students. The solution of these difficulties might have lain either in a unification of the educational authorities, or in a clear-cut separation of responsibilities and tasks.

It is clear from all that Bottai thought and said, that his solution would have been unification; he repeatedly denounced the duality in education as damaging. The creation of the G.I.L. sanctioned the 'dual system'; the two points of contact between the Ministry of Education and the Party, i.e., the office of Under-Secretary of State for Physical Instruction, and the O.N.B. as an organism depending on the Ministry, were abolished. Most of the powers connected therewith were handed over to the Secretary of the Fascist Party. On the other hand, the schools which used to come under the O.N.B. were to be administered in future by the Ministry of Education. The tasks set to the two parties were also divided more clearly, since only physical training and what was vaguely defined as moral-and-political education was entrusted to the G.I.L. This division of tasks, however, was very soon to suffer some exceptions, since the Party wanted to have special schools and colleges (*Collegi della G.I.L.*). In order to avoid the reciprocal interference depending on long and scattered school hours, the Secretary of the Party took the initiative—seconded by the Minister of Education, apparently without enthusiasm—of recommending that, wherever it was possible, schools should observe the *orario unico* (single timetable); i.e., that children should go to school only in the morning, even if this meant sitting on the benches for five hours with no more than intervals of a few minutes; the afternoon should be left free for the G.I.L. to decide what the students should do.

The institution of the Royal Commission for Rural Schools was a direct consequence of the foundation of the G.I.L. It may be remembered that, between 1928 and 1935, all the private or public bodies managing schools in the poorer and more remote areas had been practically absorbed into the O.N.B. This meant that several thousand small schools depended rather indirectly on the Ministry of Education; when the Decree-Law of 27 October 1937 created the G.I.L., the O.N.B. should have brought all those elementary schools into the new organization. Two days later another Decree-Law created the Royal Commission which was to control the rural schools, as the heir of the O.N.B. A year later detailed regulations were published, according to which these schools were brought into the framework of the general organization of elementary instruction. In this connexion, a new group was added to the five into which all the elementary schools had been divided, the group of the rural schools, corresponding in a way to those which were envisaged by the *Lex Casati*. Those schools were to be 'rural' which existed in places where there were not more than 250 inhabitants and not fewer than 20 children of school age. They were

in effect State schools and were set up by the Ministry of Education; the teachers were to be chosen in the same way as for other schools, were paid by the State, and had the same rights as the others. More than 150 'Directors' watched over an average of 50 schools each, and were subordinate to a central 'Inspector of the Rural Schools'.

One more step was thus made towards the fulfilment of the task which the State had set itself in 1859: to give opportunity for instruction to all Italian children however remote their homes. The laws of 1937 and 1938 had, however, another meaning: they blotted out the last remains of a manifold activity which had proved highly beneficial to the spread of elementary education. It was true that very often people of good will were aroused by the slackness of the central and local governments and found a remedy; but it was even truer that the enthusiasm of such apostles as Cena, who were moved to overcome all difficulties by generosity, could hardly be replaced by a bureaucratic authority which worked on statistics or under political and propagandistic pressure. Most of these schools had a very special character; many had in view the provision of an elementary technical instruction for peasant children, others gave moral and intellectual assistance rather than a real school education. Although it was officially stated that this differentiation would be preserved and increased, it was not so easy for the central administration to pay so much attention to the local needs. The Fascist principle that the individual must disappear before the State was applied in this 'assimilation' of the rural schools.

The *Ente Nazionale per l'Istruzione Media* was a body placed under the control of the State, but not altogether dependent on the central authorities. The Decree-Law of 3 June 1938 providing for its institution set it two tasks: (a) to take under its care and management secondary schools of all kinds on trust from the State, and (b) to bring about a fundamental unity in teaching methods, educational standards, and political ideas in all the private secondary schools. The Ministry of Education had the direct supervision of all administrative and teaching matters connected with the E.N.I.M. This body was governed by a Commissioner (*Commissario*) appointed by the Minister, and by two councils, one technical and one administrative, both of them presided over by the Commissioner. Both councils included one representative each of the Fascist Party, the Ministry of Education, the Fascist National Federation of private school owners, the ecclesiastical authorities, the National Syndicate of private teachers, and the teachers of ecclesiastical schools; four more members for each of the two councils were chosen among people

with a special competence in educational matters; the administrative council included a representative of the Ministry for Home Affairs and one of the Ministry of Finance.

The State might hand over to the E.N.I.M. any number of schools, and entrust it with the foundation and management of new ones. Local governments might do the same, provided that the councils of the E.N.I.M. and the Ministry agreed that the school was useful and would work properly. All these schools were considered as of State standard as regards the value of their examinations and certificates. Private schools which, after inspection, were judged good enough could join the E.N.I.M. on the same conditions as the State schools; all other private institutions for secondary education were to be accepted as members of the E.N.I.M. on application, if their standard was considered high enough by the authorities of the *Ente*. The Provincial Supervisors (*Provveditori*), who used to have the right to decide on the founding of private schools, had henceforth to submit their views to the directory of the E.N.I.M. On the other hand, the Provincial Supervisors could delegate representatives of the E.N.I.M. to inspect private schools not belonging to it.

It was clear that the first aim the legislators had in mind when they founded the E.N.I.M. was to bring together under a unified control all those activities which were not easily reached by the inspecting eyes of the government and political authorities. Bottai claimed that Gentile's attempt to give vitality to the private schools had failed; the fault, in his opinion, was that there was no organization co-ordinating the various activities and no proper hierarchy of schools; that was why the only schools which prospered, taking advantage of the 'State examination', were the ecclesiastical ones. The E.N.I.M. should meet this need. But Gentile meant to safeguard freedom of teaching. Bottai did not dwell on this dangerous point; on the contrary he reminded those interested in it that, although they were not compelled to join the E.N.I.M., it was little less than treason to abstain from so doing: 'To be a member of the E.N.I.M. is a duty for each private school'. A secondary aim of the E.N.I.M. was to allow more elasticity for the State to set up or control schools which could not be run on exactly the same lines as the regular ones. The authorities of the E.N.I.M. could in fact authorize all those alterations in time-tables, distribution of subjects between teachers, merging of several forms of the same type of school or of different schools, which might be considered advisable. Many places which could not be provided with certain schools, either because there were too few pupils or for other reasons, might benefit from these provisions.



Taken as a whole, these three innovations, i.e., the G.I.L., the Commission for Rural Schools, and the E.N.I.M. did not constitute a transformation of education. The method which has been called 'Fascistization' by degrees, a kind of 'Fabian' method, was applied in all these cases. The same can be said of other measures taken by Bottai in the same period. Military education in the schools was for some reason put on a more scholastic basis. The number of hours devoted to it was increased; more detailed programmes were dictated; the State books to be used for this subject were first published in 1937. These books, written by officers of the armed forces and experts on military matters, gave, as Bottai said, 'a clear documentation of the exceptional strengthening of the Italian armed forces due to the efforts of the Duce . . . ; they will increase Fascist enthusiasm among youth, make more nostalgic the lucky ones who fought for their country, and arouse interest among people generally, no longer ignorant of the needs of the nation and of its military destiny'. The help which the wireless could give to political propaganda in the schools was emphasized by Bottai over and over again. The limitation in the number of women teachers in secondary schools became stricter than it had been, in accordance with the precept that Fascist education must be manly. The 'demographic campaign' was responsible for restrictions on the careers of bachelors, to the point that unmarried men were prevented from becoming permanent professors in the universities. The liking for ceremonies in which the usual big words and symbols should catch the eyes and imagination of the young people led the Minister to order that the scholastic year should be inaugurated everywhere with great solemnity. The necessity that the 'Fascist style' should become the normal behaviour of both teachers and pupils was emphasized on all occasions; in practice, the use of 'tu' and 'voi' instead of 'Lei' in addressing people, and the Fascist salute instead of the handshake or taking off the hat, were to be enforced everywhere as a proof that the old times had passed away for good.

For the rest, ministerial activity went on as it had practically always done, before and during Fascism. A number of new schools were opened to receive the steadily increasing population; small changes were made in the curricula of several schools; a new general regulation for the order of studies in the universities left things practically as they were under the De Vecchi reform; the age-limits for candidates for examinations in the secondary schools, which had been abolished a few years before, were re-introduced. Nothing occurred to fulfil the order given by Mussolini, and repeated by Bottai when he started on his

new job, that 'all Italian life must be lifted on to the plane of Empire'. The fact that Rome had become again, in May 1936, the centre of an Empire did not affect the schools more than it affected other aspects of the Italian life; the imperial burden, which in other fields was of a financial character, was in the schools a burden of rhetorical words. The only substantial effect of the conquest of Abyssinia was that Mussolini led himself and Italy into servitude to Hitler and Nazi Germany; the first consequence having a direct bearing on education was the Nazi-inspired, even if not Nazi-imposed, anti-semitic policy.

### Chapter Three

#### THE RACIAL POLICY AND EDUCATION

THE measures for the 'defence of the race' in the schools can be considered as the most revolutionary in character among those taken during and before Fascism. It was the first time in the history of education in united Italy that people with Italian citizenship were deprived of all possibilities of receiving the education provided by the State and of exercising their vocation as teachers. The only discrimination before 1938 was that necessitated by the religious instruction in the schools. Private schools with a definite religious character used to exclude, of course, those children whose families wanted to have them brought up in another religion; but very frequently Jewish children did attend ecclesiastical schools. Some Jewish communities had educational institutions of their own, especially pre-elementary and elementary schools, which had the same rights as any other private school. By far the larger majority of Jewish parents used to send their children to the public schools of all grades; neither teachers nor schoolfellows paid any attention to the difference between Jew and non-Jew; very often the students did not even know that there were Jews among them; and where they did know, only religion was taken as marking the difference. The special gifts of intelligence distinguishing many young Jews naturally made them prominent in the classes; but hardly ever was there any feeling of envy on the part of other students.

The number of Jewish teachers was remarkably large in the universities, especially in the Faculties of Law and Medicine, and in the sections of Mathematics and Physics of the Faculty of Sciences. Vociferations of an anti-semitic character might have been heard among university people long before the racial campaign had started; but they were almost invariably the product of professional envy; the admiration for the achievements of many prominent scientists with a Jewish name was extended by many people to the Jews as a whole. The only fact which can be ascribed to an incipient anti-semitism in the world of culture, affecting university people directly, was the exclusion from the newly founded *Accademia d'Italia* of all Jewish men of science, which could hardly be accidental; and this was made the more apparent by the appointment of the famous mathematician

Tullio Levi-Civita to be a member of the Pontifical Academy on the morrow of the publication of the list of the *Accademici d'Italia*. The Jewish teachers in secondary and elementary schools were relatively many fewer than in the universities; and their presence as Jews was hardly ever noticed. Nor was there any distinction drawn by teachers, students, or families between educational books written by Jews and those written by non-Jews; the fact that some among the most widely circulated textbooks for the secondary schools had been written by Jewish authors had never provoked any objection from any quarter; and it is certain that very few of the hundreds of thousands or rather millions who studied geometry in the 'Enriques e Amaldi' suspected that the former was other than an Italian of Spanish origin.

The name of 'race' (*razza*) had no meaning in the normal language of the schools except as a means to divide the human kind into the four approximate groups of white, yellow, black, and red; or for the purpose of distinguishing breeds of domestic animals. More scientific anthropology made use of the word in other connexions as well; but even there, all possible definitions were very far from what would have satisfied Rosenberg or his Italian imitators. The conceptions that, for people of the average culture, stood nearer to that of race in the meaning borrowed from Germany were those of *popolo* and *stirpe*; but both were so strictly connected with the mutable course of history, so intimately expressive of a mixture of the most various elements that had contributed to the manifold aspects of civilization in the Italian peninsula and islands, and so immediately identified with the conception of the Italian-speaking community, that nothing less than the acrobatic efforts of a pseudo-science at the service of politics might hope to introduce into the language of the schools the usage of *razza italiana* as meaning a real thing. The attempt to spread the conviction that the Italian race existed, at least as something exclusive of the Jews, was made both through the 'separation' of the two 'races', and through propaganda and timid hints in the teachings of subjects concerned with that problem.

Legislation on racial matters was very drastic, more so in the educational field than in others. Less than two months after the racial 'charter', as it was later called, was published, and only four days after the expulsion of all foreign Jews living in Italy, even if naturalized after 1919, had been decreed, the Ministry of Education issued the Royal Decree-Law no. 1390, of 5 September 1938, under the title 'Provisions for the Defence of the Race in Fascist Schools'. A series of other decrees which were soon

published completed the first measures, and settled with all necessary details the question of completely suppressing 'Jewish influence' in Italian education.

The Decree-Law of 5 September 1938 consisted of six articles. According to Article 1 no Jewish teachers were to be appointed in any school or university, whether belonging to the State or standardized; university assistants and *liberi docenti* were equally excluded from new appointments if they were of the Jewish race. Article 2 provided for the exclusion of all Jewish children and young people from all State and standardized schools; according to Article 5, however, university students would be allowed to finish the course of their studies and obtain their degree. Article 3 ordered that all teachers, schoolmasters, assistants, private teachers, and employees of scholastic institutions controlled by the State, who belonged to the Jewish race should be dismissed as from 16 October 1938. According to Article 5, all the Jewish members of academies and associations for the promotion of science, art, and literature were to be dismissed. The sixth Article gave the definition of Jew to be followed in the application of the law: any one was considered to belong to the Jewish race both of whose parents were Jews, whatever his or her own religion.

Before the scholastic year 1938-39 began, the Minister sent a Circular Letter to all the heads of secondary schools and universities to the effect that all text-books written, partly written, or edited by Jewish people should cease to be used; a provisional list of more than a hundred names which was appended to the letter cited authors and editors undoubtedly belonging to the Jewish race. It was claimed that books written by Jews could be infected by their different spirit and culture, no matter whether they were Greek grammars or logarithmic tables.

The Decree-Laws of 15 and 17 November 1938 went even further than the one of 5 September in the way of discrimination against the Jews. The earlier extended to the private schools in which 'Aryan' pupils were admitted the regulation against accepting any Jewish students; the only exception was for Catholic children of Jewish race studying in ecclesiastical institutes. The later Decree-Laws, i.e., the unified text of all the anti-semitic measures taken to that date, gave a narrower interpretation to the word 'Jew'; a child only one of whose parents was a Jew was to be ascribed to that race unless the child was received into a non-Jewish religious community before 1 October 1938. Even the *patria potestas* on an officially Aryan child could be denied to a father who tried to influence him or her towards

Judaism. Dangers of this kind were to be averted, in any case, by the provisions of the first seven Articles of the unified text concerning matrimony; marriage between members of different races was forbidden, and, if contracted, was to be considered null.

The barbarous way in which Jews were deprived of all access to education in schools roused such indignation that two successive decrees were issued to the effect that classes for Jewish students might be given under certain circumstances. The Decree-Law of 23 September 1938 ordered that special sections should be set up in those elementary schools where at least ten Jewish children were enrolled; teachers for these classes might be Jewish. According to the same Decree the Jewish communities were allowed to open elementary schools of the standardized type, provided they obtained a regular permission and agreed to have a Government representative to supervise the examinations. The text-books in all these schools for Jews were the same as those for the others, except as regards religion. The Decree-Law of 15 November 1938 which excluded Jewish students from all private secondary schools provided for permission to be given to the Jewish communities or private Jews to open schools of their own, in which only Jewish students might be accepted. Jewish teachers had the right of teaching, and books written by Jews could be used. Pupils from these schools were allowed to take the final examinations under the State commissions; but no way was open to them to enter the universities.

No changes were made in the programmes for the elementary and secondary schools in connexion with the racial question; but it was urged from all Government and Party quarters that the teachers and students must become 'race-conscious'. It was to be part of the 'Fascist style' not to pity the Jews for their unhappy lot; the exaltation of the Italian race was to replace the exaltation of the Italian *stirpe*; the ban on Jewish authors would prevent the teachers from expounding, and commenting upon, the works of such writers as Spinoza; some new text-books of history, geography, Fascist doctrine, and other subjects started using the new jargon, and setting out the racial measures as one more achievement of the Fascist régime. University teaching was affected more than secondary education by the introduction of the racial doctrine. This had to become one of the fundamental aspects of anthropology, demography, and kindred sciences. Accordingly new subjects were added to the lists of several faculties, and the names of other existing subjects were changed. The Decree of 30 September 1938 included the following provisions: (a) general demography and comparative racial demography (replacing the former teaching of general and

comparative demography) became a compulsory subject for the Diploma in Statistics, and a complementary one in the Faculties of Law, Political Sciences and Economy, and Commerce; (b) general anthropometry and comparative racial anthropometry (formerly, general and comparative anthropometry), and general sanitary statistics and comparative racial statistics (formerly, general and comparative sanitary statistics), became fundamental subjects for the Diploma in Statistics; (c) biology of the human races (a new subject) became an auxiliary subject for candidates for degrees in philosophy, *belles lettres*, pedagogy, medicine, natural and biological sciences; (d) the higher course of demography was changed into the course on the 'development of population and racial politics'; (e) more chairs of anthropology were to be set up as soon as possible.

Immediately after the racial campaign started, the first number of the periodical *La Difesa della Razza* (The Defence of the Race) was issued. Although the name and much of the contents promised to give a broad view on all problems connected with the biological welfare of the Italian race, the first and practically the only aim was to make more palatable to the people at large, under a muddled scientific disguise, the very unpopular anti-semitism, and to show that its motives were quite different from those of the German movement. A Circular Letter by the Minister of Education, written as early as 6 August 1938, asked the headmasters of all schools to give the widest circulation to that magazine among teachers and students. The National Institute of Fascist Culture and the universities were asked by the Minister to collaborate in order to spread the racial doctrine by means of lectures and visits to ethnological museums, for the benefit of all students and other people.

The expulsion of all Jews from the Party and Party organizations, and their exclusion from military service, followed immediately on the other restrictions. Jewish children were therefore expelled from the G.I.L., and consequently deprived of all physical education. In this way the 'separation', i.e., the confinement to a moral and intellectual ghetto, was completed, so far as that could be achieved by political action.

Apart from the blow dealt to the liberal character of Italian educational institutions, in the name of something alien to the spirit of the Italian people and to the fundamental laws of Christianity, the schools and universities suffered heavily from the persecution of Jewish teachers and authors. No fewer than 98 permanent professors out of 1,000 had to abandon their chairs; 196 *liberi docenti* were deprived of the right of lecturing; several hundred teachers in secondary and elementary schools

had to stop teaching; some of the best text-books were withdrawn from circulation. While the expulsion of teachers affected the universities enormously, the prohibition of some books was most serious for the secondary schools; the elementary schools suffered least, because the books had already been 'purged' through the imposition of the *libro unico*, and because not many Jews had become elementary teachers.

Practically every region of study and research lost some of its best scholars and men of science. The Faculties which suffered most were those of Science, Medicine, and Law. Italian science took pride in the very high standard of mathematical studies. The University of Rome had already lost the collaboration of Vito Volterra, who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the régime; it was now deprived of the irreplaceable teaching of Tullio Levi-Civita, one of the greatest living analysts and theorists of mathematical mechanics; Federigo Enriques, who had among other merits that of having kept alive interest in the philosophical problems connected with mathematics and that of having spread interest in the history of science, was another irreparable loss for the same university. Giacomo Fubini, Beppo Levi, and Giulio Fano were among other mathematicians who had to abandon their university chairs. Physics had experienced a notable revival under the leadership of Enrico Fermi; his school in Rome had already produced a number of young physicists trained in the most difficult modern theories and experiments. Most prominent among them were Franco Rasetti, of the University of Rome, and Bruno Rossi who had just set up in Padua one of the best physical institutes in Italy, specially fitted for the study of cosmic rays. Both Rasetti and Rossi, as well as a number of *liberi docenti* and assistants coming from Fermi's school, were Jews. Fermi himself felt that it was impossible for him to carry on his work in the atmosphere of persecution and without the help of his friends and collaborators. Just at that time he was being awarded the Nobel Prize in Oslo; he never returned to Italy, and is now carrying on his researches in the United States.

The medical Faculties lost, among others, the anatomist Giuseppe Levi, the specialist in internal medicine Mario Donati, the physiologist Carlo Foà. A large number of professional doctors, specialists of all kinds, lectured as private teachers, or worked in the hospitals annexed to the universities; the number of medical teachers, already too small, was severely reduced through the expulsion of the Jews. The Faculties of Law and Economics had their efficiency badly reduced; the economists Giorgio Mortara, Marco Fanno, Gustavo Del Vecchio, the jurist



Edoardo Volterra, the professors of the Philosophy of Law Giorgio Del Vecchio and Adolfo Ravà, and several others left a difficult task for those who had to appoint successors. In other fields there deserve to be remembered the names of the linguist Benvenuto Terracini, the medievalist Giorgio Falco, the historian of Italian literature Attilio Momigliano, the philosophers Adolfo Levi, Rodolfo Mondolfo and Lodovico Limentani, the historians of Greece and Rome Arnaldo Momigliano and Marco Attilio Levi, the archaeologist Alessandro Della Seta, the geographer Roberto Almagià, the chemists Camillo and Giacomo Levi.

It is impossible to say how many text-books were banned as a result of the Circular Letter of 30 September 1938. A few of them are worth mentioning because they had become so widespread that a sudden change imposed upon teachers who had been accustomed to use them for years could not but affect their teaching, at least for some time; and the intrinsic value of some of them had rendered, and might have rendered for a long time to come, the best service to Italian culture. The *Manuale della Letteratura Italiana* by Alessandro D'Ancona and Orazio Bacci, whose first edition was published in 1892, had, in spite of many attempts to replace it, remained for nearly half a century the most reliable anthology, bibliography, and biographical history of Italian literature for the use of students in secondary schools and universities. Attilio Momigliano's *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* won in a few years a very wide circulation, interpreting in masterly fashion the development of Italian literature in the light of the new conceptions of history and art. The *Elementi di Geometria* of Federigo Enriques and Ugo Amaldi, published in all kinds of editions adapted to the various types of secondary schools, had been for about thirty years the text-book for geometry in hundreds of schools. Roberto Almagià's text-books of geography were becoming more and more popular, as well as the mural maps drawn under his direction, which had marked a great improvement on all that preceded them in Italy. Vivante's books on Commercial Law, and Mortara's on economy were indispensable to university students; as also were a number of medical manuals. All of them had to disappear suddenly after October 1938, even though no substitutes could be found.

The number of Jewish children who had to leave the elementary schools can be reckoned at about five thousand; several thousands were cleared from the secondary schools and not accepted into the first year of the universities. Several elementary schools were opened immediately in the towns where the Jewish community was numerous enough and could afford it;

in such places as Rome, Turin, Milan, Florence, Leghorn, Padua, Venice, and Trieste, and possibly in a few others, secondary schools were also set up by Jewish committees. It is not possible to say what the results of these schools were. Given the conditions in which Jews were expected to live, it is difficult to believe that the education would be of the same standard as in the other schools. Students coming from all types of schools had to be put together in small classes; the fact that the universities were closed to Jews made it useless to give that preparatory instruction which was acquired by most Jewish children in the State secondary schools; in some places there was discernible a tendency to transform the schools for Jews into Jewish schools of the traditional, religious type. A great number of Jewish children were kept at home, even where schools for them existed; and many families emigrated or waited for an opportunity to do so.

## Chapter Four

### THE 'NEW HUMANISM' OF THE SCHOOL CHARTER

BOTTAI was no friend of wholesale and hasty reforms; so he declared several times in the two first years of his office as Minister for Education. Soon afterwards, however, he became the champion of what he liked to call the 'revolution inside the revolution', applying to the schools the formula that had failed when he first used it for the corporate system. Was it because he realized that *Ars longa, ministerium breve*? Many ministers before him, and before Fascism, had tried to rush their plans into reality before they disappeared from the scene. It is probable, however, that Mussolini himself urged Bottai to hasten a reform which would, at least, have kept the minds of many people busy at a time when he was planning something quite different from the re-education of the not-yet-Fascist Italian race. Bottai's anxiety to ascribe to the Duce the merit of 'precipitating' the publication of the School Charter, and of embarking immediately on fundamental changes in the school system appears to mean more than the usual act of totalitarian worship and discharge of responsibilities. It is difficult to say how many of the ideas that prevailed in the School Charter are Bottai's own, and how many are other people's. As recently as the beginning of 1943 Bottai defended himself against attacks on the new reform by claiming that the fundamental outlines were drawn by Mussolini himself; to him was due the conception of the 'new humanism' which formed the spirit of the Fascist school, and the decision to merge many lower secondary schools into the *Scuola Media Unica*.

It is extremely difficult to say anything clear about this 'new humanism'; more difficult still to say what is new in it. It was opposed to the old humanism as to a literary and *bourgeois* form of decadence; but the accusation itself was very old, and was at the basis of the 'idealistic humanism' of the Gentile reform. It is worth while, however, to reproduce some passages from Bottai's introduction to the School Charter; whatever their intrinsic value they will serve as a document of what was claimed to be the great spiritual revolution of Italy. 'Humanism represents unchangeable and traditional values, realizes and defines man in terms of culture, is the horizon of inner life, orientates the vocations, instructs the intelligence and forms the conscience,

and strives to bring to their highest point our inner powers by harmonizing and directing them. The kind of humanism which does not vanquish the temptation to become merely a literary thing and one of life's luxuries cannot satisfy modern man. . . . The modern humanism must insist that to be a man means to serve men. The modern revolt against the Graeco-Roman humanistic studies is due to their reduction to a mere literary fact. Two gigantic forces, work and applied science of which men have become more and more aware, have driven humanism to its decline and an almost archaeological life. . . . Communism thought of classical culture as of the intellectual product of capitalism. . . . Fascism excommunicates no cultural values; the legacy of the past belongs to it, and it will transfer the inheritance to all Italians. It is true, however, that classical culture can give rise to individualism and privilege whenever it restricts itself to a literary refinement. . . . Gentile's reform has found itself disarmed in front of these difficulties.'

Bottai did not suggest that the classics should have only a secondary part to play in education; but he said hardly anything on the way in which they must be brought out of their archaeological life into the dynamic world of the Fascist era. It seems clear that he did not dare to drop something which was too much alive, and was content with promising a rejuvenation of the immortals. Something more positive, which Bottai himself did not call humanism, but which corresponded more to his view of mankind, was to be found in the proposals for the introduction of work into the schools, and in the conception of 'scholastic service'. 'There is felt the need of a junction between life and the schools. . . . Why are the schools out of touch with life? There is one answer: life is work. Work, in its most popular and convincing meaning is hand work; but the schools do not know, and even despise, manual work; they are absent at a moment when a real mysticism of work is coming into being. The schools are treading a path which seems to be on a different planet from that on which men sweat both for the satisfaction of their material needs and for their belief in the redeeming virtue of the hands wielding the tools. The same antinomy that people of culture thought existed between the schools and sport is now asserted to exist between the schools and work; work shall win as sport did; and even more completely, if work is able to merge with culture.' Research aiming at a classification of intelligence is based mainly on work; and it is necessary for the new methods of 'psycho-technics' to be applied in the Italian schools. 'The myth of the intelligence *in se* is disappearing; it is possible to give, through the schools, a portrait of the mind of each individual and to deter-

mine a hierarchy of intellects, inventive and critical powers. In order to make use of men, one must know their talents. . . . The empyrean heaven of philosophy must be abandoned; and the greatest possible advantage for the community must be derived from the human factor.' Another benefit coming from manual work in the schools is that 'those who are to form the ruling class will know directly, and not only intellectually, what the difficulties, joys, and pains of the workers are'. Much time is now wasted in trying to accumulate a great amount of useless knowledge; the time devoted to these encyclopaedic studies must be reduced, and more time given to a completer education and the acquisition of practical talents. 'The common basis of the Italian schools will be given by manual work.'

The idea of a compulsory 'scholastic service' corresponding to military conscription had been formulated long before. At that time, however, it was meant as a necessary measure to overcome illiteracy. The phrase was revived by Bottai with a quite different meaning. The scholastic service should be, in the mind of the Fascist legislators, like a military service of a lower grade. The duty to serve the country in a totalitarian way did not begin at the twentieth or twenty-first year of age; the citizen was a soldier from his birth, and the schools and Party organization got hold of him as soon as possible, in order, not so much to educate him, as to make him serve.

The seven first 'declarations' of the School Charter expounded the principles, ends, and methods of the Fascist scholastic education. A detailed analysis of these articles could not be a full substitute for the text itself, because the style in which they were drawn was indicative of the legislator's mind, more perhaps than the things said. They read as follows:

'1. In the moral, political, and economic unity of the Italian nation which is realized integrally in the Fascist State, the schools—which constitute the first foundation of the solidarity between all the social forces from the family to the corporations and the Party—shape the human and political conscience of the new generations. The Fascist schools bring into reality the principle of a culture of the people drawing inspiration from the eternal values of the Italian race and its civilization; the means thereto is study conceived as forming a mature mind. That principle is engrafted in the actual crafts, arts, professions, sciences, and military life, through work.

'2. The periods for scholastic and political education coincide under the Fascist order. The schools, G.I.L., and G.U.F. together form one instrument of Fascist education. The duty to

attend them constitutes the scholastic service, to which all citizens are bound from their early age to twenty-one years. This service consists in attending the schools and G.I.L. from the fourth to the fourteenth year; it goes on in the G.I.L. until the twenty-first year for those who no longer go to school. University students must belong to the G.U.F. A "personal book" testifies to the accomplishment of the scholastic service; it will be connected with the workers' book, and taken into account for the valuation of the individuals in offices and jobs.

'3. Studies will be arranged in accordance with the actual physical and intellectual abilities of young people; these studies aim at their moral and cultural formation, and at their political and military preparation, in harmony with the ends of the G.I.L. The only criterion for admitting young people to studies and allowing them to go on in the schools is that given by individual talents and capabilities. The state colleges guarantee that capable but poor people should be able to continue in their studies.

'4. Physical education is given in the schools by the G.I.L.; it follows and favours the gradual growth and physical strengthening, as well as spiritual progress. The technique of the exercises aims at a harmonious development, efficiency, a high moral standard, self-assurance, and a strong sense of discipline and duty. The G.U.F. provides for the sport and military training of university students.

'5. Work, which is protected by the State in all its forms, whether intellectual, manual, or technical, as a social duty, contributes, together with studies and physical training, towards shaping character and intelligence. Manual work has a share in the programmes of the schools in all grades. Special turns of work are to be organized and directed by the school authorities in the workshops, fields, and on the sea, so that the social and productive consciousness, characteristic of the corporative system, may be formed.

'6. Study, physical exercises, and manual work provide the schools with the means for testing talent. The main tasks of the schools are to give a cultural and professional orientation so that men capable of facing the actual problems of scientific research and production may be prepared according to reason and needs. Selection must go on continuously in the schools, so that their functions and characteristics may be safeguarded.

'7. There is a natural solidarity between family and schools; they collaborate intimately and uninterruptedly to the end of educating and orienting youth. Parents and relatives participate in the life of the schools and learn there to know the common aims and methods which help to strengthen children and young

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people on the path of the traditional religion and destiny of Italy.'

Apart from the points already mentioned, a few others should be given attention in this plan for education. It is noteworthy that only very vague hints were made about the relation between family, religious, and State education, and only a few rhetorical words were used to explain the content and ideals of education. No mention was made of an imperialistic education, except for military training. Although the function of the Party organizations was emphasized in connexion with the physical and political preparation, no attempt was made to merge them and the schools into one single educational organization. The anti-*bourgeois* attitude of Bottai which had led him to his severe criticism of Gentile's reform found very faint expression in the third article; it was laid down that the education of everybody worthy of it, in all grades, should be the fundamental principle guaranteed by a State in which equality of opportunity is offered. The 'state colleges' should become the most important educational institution in the country, if those who could not afford to choose a higher education corresponding to their calling were to find in them their cultural home. The ideas expressed in these seven 'declarations', whether only hinted at or clearly developed, needed for their realization a fundamentally new educational system, in which totally new institutions would be set up, and the old ones very largely altered; there would be little room for private schools, since the 'scholastic service', like military service, was to have a State character. The twenty-two 'declarations' in the School Charter dealt with this new system; it is among them that one finds how far the revolution was conceived as practicable by the heads of Fascism. It is too early to say what the application of the principles brought about; but what is known of the actual life of the 'new' schools in the last four years is enough to give some idea how far they were put into practice.

## Chapter Five

### THE 'NEW' EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

THE eighth article of the School Charter gave the main lines of the educational system which was meant to prevail after the reforms had been introduced. The schools are divided into 'orders' (*ordini*): (1) the elementary order covers ten school-years, for children from four to fourteen; the first two years form the *Scuola Materna* (nursery schools), followed by the elementary school, which lasts three years, the labour school lasting two years, and finally the Artisan School for three more years. (2) The 'intermediate order' includes the Middle School (three years), and, parallel to this, the three-year Professional School leading to the two-year Technical School. (3) The 'upper order' is divided into four parallel types of schools lasting five years each, and four more parallel types lasting four years: the Classical Lyceum, Science Lyceum, Training College, Technical Commercial Institute, of five years; the Institute for Agricultural, Industrial, Geometrical, and Nautical Skill, of four years. (4) The 'university order' is divided into fifteen Faculties and several schools with special aims; the Faculties are those of (a) Law; (b) Political Science; (c) Economy and Commerce; (d) *Belles Lettres* and Philosophy; (e) *Magistero*; (f) Medicine and Surgery; (g) Veterinary Medicine; (h) Mathematical, Physical, and Natural Sciences; (i) Statistics and Demography; (j) Pharmacy; (k) Engineering, (l) Mining Engineering; (m) Industrial Chemistry; (n) Architecture, and (o) Agriculture. The university courses last from four to six years, according to the various Faculties; courses for perfecting studies and specialized courses of different kinds can be set up. (5) The 'special orders' include the art schools (Beginners' Course in Art, School of Art, Institute of Art, Course of Instruction in Design, Art Lyceum, Academy of Art, Conservatory of Music, Academy of Dramatic Art), the institutes for women (Women's Institute and Instruction for Women), and the courses for workers.

This classification of the schools given in the School Charter has few innovations. The two main differences are the Middle School and the Labour School; the names, at least, indicate something quite different from what existed before. Other differences are set forth in 'declarations' 9-22, which deal in some detail with the various types of schools. One looks in vain,



however, for any sweeping change. Articles 9 and 10 deal with the 'elementary order'; the only mention of the *Scuola del Lavoro* is this: 'The Labour School kindles the taste, interest, and consciousness of manual work by way of practical exercises organically co-ordinated with studies'; this means that the two last years of the existing elementary schools are changed in name, and that some exercises in manual work are to be introduced. Great importance was assigned to the Artisan School in the commentary to the School Charter presented by Bottai to the Grand Council of Fascism; the tenth 'declaration', however, does not point to any great difference between these schools and the previously existing post-elementary schools, apart from the fact that the cultural side is to be considered secondary in importance when compared with the productive manual work done in the classes.

The great innovation, affecting school establishments on a large scale, was the *Scuola Media Unica*. The fight round this point had raged for half a century before Fascism. Three main solutions were visualized by the competitors: (a) all children having finished their elementary instruction in the five forms of the primary schools should have access to a post-elementary middle school lasting three or four years, after which there would be a choice of higher instruction; (b) a post-elementary school of a popular type should receive all the children who had no vocation or possibility of continuing their studies, and one lower secondary school should receive those who might continue their instruction in higher establishments of different kinds; (c) side by side with numerous popular schools equal or different in type for children between ten and fifteen, not aiming at continuing their education, there should be many types of lower secondary schools, each of them giving access to the various higher types of schools. The last solution had been accepted by Gentile; he went even further than his predecessors, in that he set up the Lower Technical Institute, detaching it from the former Technical Schools. While the names of the lower secondary schools were different, and they were established in the buildings where the higher sections were seated, the instruction given in the several types had been essentially the same, and if changes were brought into the curricula the tendency to bring them to the same standard was increasing. In fact, since Latin had become the fundamental subject in the Lower Training Colleges and the Lower Technical Institute, the minor differences in the curricula of mathematics, history, modern languages, and the existence of some special subject in the Lower Technical Institute or Lower Training College did not justify the maintenance of three

different types of schools at that stage. If a difference of a certain importance existed, it lay in the fact that families chose the type of school according to their views on the careers to which they led; so that the distinction between the three types was more social than cultural.

The decision to abolish the distinction between the Lower 'Gymnasium', Lower Training College and Lower Technical Institute was more the acceptance of a natural evolution than a bold reform. The possibility had always been given to children educated in one or the other of the lower secondary courses to pass, by easy examinations, to the higher courses of the other schools. It could not be of great consequence if, in some places, the lower course with the new name of Intermediate School was put in a separate building from one or other of the higher courses. The education given in the Intermediate School is, according to the ninth article of the School Charter, to be the same as was given in the several lower courses of the previous secondary schools: 'The Intermediate School, common for all those who intend to continue their studies in the higher schools (*Ordine Superiore*), gives the children between eleven and fourteen the foundations of humanistic culture; . . . the teaching of Latin is a factor of moral and intellectual formation.' It was unlikely that the addition of some manual work, 'in the form and with the methods of productive work', could change very much the structure of this humanistic school for children. The twelfth and thirteenth articles consider the professional and technical schools without hinting at any novelty.

The substitution of the *Scuola Media Unica* for the lower courses of the various secondary schools forced some changes on the upper courses. The two higher forms of the 'Gymnasium' and the three forms of the Classical Lyceum were united in name as they were already in character; the Classical Lyceum of five years was not thereby changed, except that a little more time was devoted to modern languages; the fourteenth article repeated what had been the characteristics of these schools, with the sole addition of the new feature of manual work: 'The five years' Classical Lyceum, perfecting the teaching of the classical languages and literatures through that of the modern, perpetuates and revives the lofty humanistic tradition of our studies. It promotes in young people the habit of meditation, serious criticism, preparation for methodical research, awareness of tradition and modern life, and a direct and practical knowledge of manual work. The scientific subjects have a share corresponding to the special aims of this type of school.' The words are perhaps more complicated than they used to be, but the things are practically the same.

The Science Lyceum course was also extended to last five years, so that the lower and the upper course together lasted, as before, eight years, and nothing was changed in its humanistic and scientific character. A reform of a certain importance, which struck directly against Gentile's plan for the training colleges for teachers (*Istituti Magistrali*) was proposed by the sixteenth article of the Charter. These schools, to which access was obtained from the *Scuola Media Unica*, were to last one year more than previously, the last year being devoted to actual training in elementary schools. Gentile had abolished even the few hours which had been devoted before his reform to this training in the last two years of the Normal School; he thought they were useless, and even detrimental. According to the Charter of Labour one year of training was necessary for the intending teacher to learn the method he would have to follow. Nothing was added to the prevailing system by the seventeenth and eighteenth articles regarding the Technical Institutes.

The 'declaration' dealing with the universities is specially disappointing. It had been claimed, not without reason, that the universities were the seat of the middle-class, liberal, democratic tradition. Moreover it had been repeatedly urged that the ambiguous character of these institutions, meant to promote at the same time the progress of pure science and the preparation of professional men and public officials, should be changed fundamentally. The text of the nineteenth article, the only one dedicated to this question, restricts itself to this: 'The university has as its object to promote the progress of science at a level of high responsibility both political and moral, and to form the scientific culture indispensable for the exercise of the offices and professions. The courses and schools for perfecting studies have merely scientific aims and characteristics; while the courses and schools for specialization have a prevailing practical aim. Sport and military and practical training contribute to shaping the character of the students.'

Nothing new was foreseen for the art schools, so far as can be gathered from the twentieth article of the School Charter. The provisions for other schools belonging to the *Ordini Speciali* might, on the contrary, have changed some important features in the educational system if they had been put into practice on a large scale. The twenty-first article, dealing with the schools for girls, says that 'the social mission of women and their destination are kept distinct from those of men in the Fascist life. The transformation of co-educational schools will materialize hand in hand with the still undefined new directions of women's work in the corporative system. . . . The girls' institutes will prepare women

spiritually for their household duties and for teaching in nursery schools.'

If this meant that the girls were to disappear from the Lyceum and Technical Institute, and, consequently, from practically all the university Faculties, the aspect of the modern Italian schools, and possibly of the whole of education, would have changed considerably; but the vagueness of the conditions under which this was to happen, i.e., the future definition of work for women in the corporative system, made it doubtful that anything of the kind would have taken place at least for a very long time. The special courses for workers, about which a hint was given in the Charter of Labour, were to be set up, mainly, by the syndicates; they were to represent the main link between culture and production. The twenty-second article is, however, again too vague to make one sure that there is something really constructive in it.

The ways of assessing the proficiency of the pupils at the end of every scholastic year, and, especially, at the end of their secondary studies, were to be changed, according to the twenty-fourth article of the School Charter; and so were some of the rules for admission to the universities, according to the twenty-fifth article. The introduction of the State examination as the final test of the achievements of secondary students had been one of the most important innovations brought about by Gentile. It may be remembered that the idea was to put private and public students in the same position, so that impartial examiners, unknown to the candidates, and representing only the interests of culture and the State, should decide who was worthy of entering the universities or the professions. Several difficulties had presented themselves in this system, the most important of which was the difficulty of finding as many reliable university teachers, willing to preside over the many hundreds of boards of examiners, as were necessary. Still, it seemed to be an improvement on the former system. The School Charter struck another blow at Gentile's reform by reducing the State examination (the name remained) to little more than the old internal examination. The board of examiners was to be formed by members of whom only two were outsiders, the others being the teachers of the public schools in which the examinations were held. The result was that the students of the State schools were again in a privileged position in comparison with the 'private' candidates. A partial remedy to this inequality was suggested in the School Charter by allowing State examinations to be held in those private schools which were members of the E.N.I.M.S. and recognized as of normal standard.

Promotion from one form to another of the same course of studies was to be obtained after a favourable collective judgement by all the teachers had been given. It had always been the rule that each teacher should assess the pupils for each subject taught by him; the common opinion of the teachers could influence the decisions in some cases, but a pupil was not allowed to pass from one form to another without sitting for an examination in those subjects, generally not more than two, in which the teachers thought he was not proficient. According to the new principles, the teachers had to discuss the position of each pupil and reach a common decision on his proficiency in general and in detail; if the majority decided that the pupil was mature enough, even if he was below standard, e.g., in mathematics, he was to be allowed to pass on to the upper form without any special examination. If it seemed advisable to the majority that the pupil should be tested in some subjects before entering the upper form, he would have to sit for an examination between the summer vacation and the beginning of the scholastic year in October. This was meant, perhaps, to break the rigidity with which different subjects were kept in something like watertight compartments while teachers hardly ever cared to consult each other on the merits of the individual pupils.

The principle that, at intervals of a few years, the students must be tested and selected if they wanted to continue their studies, remained valid under the School Charter; in fact it became even stricter as regards accession to the 'university Faculties. The State examination taken at the end of the Classical Lyceum, Science Lyceum, and Technical Institute used to be sufficient for the students to be admitted to the Faculties to which each school gave access. The twenty-fifth article of the School Charter rules that in many instances special examinations must be passed for admission. Thus, students coming from the Classical Lyceum, who were in the past accepted in all Faculties (with the exception of the *Magistero*), would have to pass special tests if they wanted to enter them; they would, however, have free access to the Faculties of *Belles Lettres* and Philosophy, Law, and Political Sciences. The students of the Science Lyceum had been excluded from the Faculties of *Belles Lettres* and Philosophy, Laws, and *Magistero*; they would henceforth be allowed to enter the Faculty of Law after passing an examination; they would also have to pass an examination for the Faculties of Political Sciences and Economy, and Commerce; to all the other Faculties they were to be admitted freely. Students from various sections of the Technical Institute would have more choice than before, if they wanted to take university degrees. On

the whole these measures were meant to distribute more evenly the opportunities of higher education, and especially to reduce to smaller proportions the 'privilege' enjoyed by the students of the Classical Lyceum.

Was this a new system of education? Bottai had clearly expressed the view that, in order to change the schools, the mind and methods of the teachers had to be changed more than the institutions. He did not give any assistance to this end. The only article of the Charter of Labour dealing with the teachers is quite empty of any constructive meaning. The schools, he said, must cease to be reserved to the middle classes, as they have always been, and more than ever under Gentile's reform. The solution hinted at in the introductory articles is to lie in the 'State Colleges'; but nothing is said about them in the rest of the Charter of Labour; and what Bottai said in the report to the Grand Council showed that they were no solution at all; he thought of reforming to that end the existing National and other boarding-schools. Specially gifted pupils should be chosen among the children of the post-elementary Artisan Schools to be trained there in order that they might enter the higher schools. It is clear that only a very small minority of the 'have-nots' would have any chance of competing with those whose families could pay.

The introduction of manual work could change the face of the schools only if it were done on a very large scale; no hint of that was given in the School Charter. Almost all the institutions remained practically as they were before; the alterations were never of a substantial character. Some of them might be beneficial, others might lead to disorder and confusion. The 'new' schools appeared to be again the 'old', undergoing another series of 'retouches' of the kind to which they had been accustomed since their birth. The penetration of Fascist ideals and methods was noticeable only in the conception of 'scholastic service' and in the re-statement of the importance of the E.N.I.M.S. Even the School Charter failed to make a revolution in the Italian educational system.

## Chapter Six

### THE SCHOOL CHARTER AT WORK

THE period between 1939 and 1943 was too short for the reforms planned by Bottai to take place to their full extent, and for those which were brought about to prove either a success or a failure. Although the war effort in Italy was far from total, school life was affected by it in many ways, so that even without reforms in progress it would have been very irregular. The lack of fuel made it necessary to prolong winter vacations to nearly two months instead of the usual fortnight or so; summer vacations started at the end of May, i.e., one month in advance; building of new schools had to be stopped; and so on. These were the conditions in which the lower courses of the secondary schools were to be transformed into the Intermediate Schools, the number of classes to be increased, laboratories opened, Colleges of the G.I.L. founded, and many other colleges and boarding-schools reorganized, if the School Charter was to materialize before it was too late.

It is impossible to know with any exactitude what happened in fact to the Italian schools in these last years. The information available refers to a great activity in reform and in bringing about the 'new order'. But this does not mean that the changes were more than a substitution of labels. It is therefore necessary to be careful not to take the announcements of radical transformations at their face value before it is possible to check them on the spot after the war. The three main points that call for attention in regard to the schools are: (a) the institution of the Intermediate School; (b) the reform of the State examinations; and (c) the introduction of manual work in all schools, especially in those for children between ten and fourteen.

The Intermediate School was founded in 1940, and started work for the first form in October of the same year. This meant that the first form of the Lower 'Gymnasium', *Magistrali Inferiori*, and Lower Technical Institute were put on the same level. The same curricula were applied in all of them; and pupils were not bound to the special kind of school to which this first form belonged. Although with few exceptions the first form of the Intermediate School was to all appearance the old first form of the various schools, and had no premises of its own in separate buildings, it was the nucleus of a quite independent school. In

the following years the other forms of the Intermediate School started work, being substituted for the corresponding forms of the old lower courses. In places in which several lower courses existed, but were not attended by many pupils, only one Intermediate School took their place, either in one of the buildings of the existing schools or elsewhere. The curricula for this Intermediate School were arranged apparently in a way very similar to those of the old lower courses. Some statements by Bottai emphasized as an important difference that history was studied in an anthology of writers of the several periods; for the rest he contented himself with celebrating the 'liveliness' of the new teaching without showing in what it consisted. An important difference (which perhaps applied also to the other types of schools) was that promotion to higher forms became much easier, and less conditioned by proficiency in all subjects. Bottai claimed as a great achievement of his reforms that, owing to the new way of judging children for what they were worth 'on the whole', the number of those who failed to pass into higher forms diminished considerably. Another rule that was applied very strictly, at least in the first year, was that no class in the Intermediate School could have more than thirty children. It had always been one of the stumbling-blocks in the progress of the schools that the number of youngsters attracted or pushed into them was too great for the teachers whom the State could afford to pay. Gentile's plans to restrict the size of classes to thirty-five had failed. Bottai increased by 25 per cent the number of classes for the first form in the Intermediate School in the first year of its life, mostly on account of this limit of thirty pupils. It is not known, however, how the teachers were found for them. Nor is it known whether this increase in the numbers of classes continued and whether the limitation was kept in the following years. The three forms of the Intermediate School were working according to Bottai's plans in 1942-43, the last year of Fascism. It is possible that the Intermediate School remains as the one legacy of the School Charter to the future school organization of Italy.

The State examinations instituted by Gentile in 1923 had undergone only slight changes before 1939, and it appeared that the system could continue working without undue inconvenience. It was, however, stopped by Bottai, who in agreement with the ideas expressed in the School Charter decreed that the board of examiners would be formed by the teachers of the public and of many private schools. One State representative was to see that the regulations were observed and that justice prevailed.

There are very few details available on manual work in the



schools. It is very unlikely that it became a regular feature in the life of the students. Nor are the figures given by the authorities very significant. It was announced that in 1939-40, the first year after the School Charter, 621,027 children did some manual work, out of 1,780,816; in the second year the number grew to 1,272,922. But what the work was, and how often it was practised during the two school years, was not stated. It was pointed out only that the girls' work for the soldiers was particularly successful. In his report to Mussolini in 1940 Bottai explained that manual work in the schools was still in an experimental stage. But however little of it was done, it is sure to have affected the normal life of the schools by adding one more interest, or one more distraction, bringing the children more and more 'into touch with life'.

Of the schools for girls, which, according to the School Charter, were to prepare the new Italian women for their home and social life, a certain number (about eighty) were ordered by Mussolini in June 1941; it does not appear, however, that they were set up. An experiment in the new feminine education is stated to have been made in the *R. Scuola di Magistero 'Principessa di Piemonte'* in Rome; but from the details available, it appears that it was run on the lines of the existing Professional Schools for Women. If the new education for women were to have made a beginning it would have required the setting up of hundreds of new schools, or the transformation of co-educational schools. It appears that nothing of this kind was attempted, and that the number of girls attending the usual schools did not decrease.

There seems to have been, on the other hand, a growing educational activity on the part of the G.I.L., both for girls and boys. According to a report on the activities of the G.I.L. in 1941 almost three million girls attended the courses organized for them by the G.I.L. and received training in housekeeping, nursing, sewing, etc. A girls' college for 300 'leaders' of the G.I.L. was set up in Florence; two for musical instructors were founded in Bergamo (for girls) and Vicenza (for boys). Two colleges for war orphans were opened by the G.I.L. at Turin and Lecce. In Taranto the *Educatore Giovane 'Angelo Pozzi'* was opened by the G.I.L. for children of destitute parents; fifty-five children were there given elementary education and training for agricultural and industrial work. This was one, perhaps the first, institute of a type devised by the G.I.L. in order to meet, in agreement with the requirements of the School Charter, the need for special institutions for the poorer classes. Another institution meant for the same purpose was that of the *Centri di*

*preparazione al lavoro* including the *Centri di primo addestramento* and the *Centri di lavoro* for children up to fourteen and from fourteen to seventeen. It is not known, however, how far the actual setting up of these boarding-schools and 'centres' went.

The part taken by the Syndicates and Corporations in educating the workers had been little more than nothing, in spite of the declarations of the Charter of Labour. In 1942 two institutes depending on them tried to give life to a regular educational activity for the workers. The *Istituto Nazionale Fascista per l'Addestramento ed il Perfezionamento dei Lavoratori dell'Industria* (I.N.F.A.P.L.I.) and the corresponding one for the workers of Commerce (I.N.F.A.P.L.C.) started hundreds of courses all over Italy, both vocational and political.

While the social-educational policy of Bottai went along these lines, aiming mostly at the lower secondary schools and at the Party and syndical organizations, the elementary and higher secondary schools and the universities continued working as they had done before the School Charter. The main change for the elementary schools was their final incorporation into the State system, since the teachers were recognized as State officials. This measure, which slightly improved their financial position, and was perhaps considered by them as a recognition of their merits, made them also members of the huge bureaucratic hierarchy of the Fascist State. The institution of the Labour Schools and Artisan Schools forecast by the School Charter was brought about only in part. It does not appear to have affected the schools themselves to any extent, as the redistribution of classes and curricula was more verbal than substantial.

It appears that a reform of the universities was being studied. Bottai had asked the advice of the *Rettori* and professors, in order to know what was needed to bring the universities into line with the principles of the School Charter. But nothing came of this before 1943, so that De Vecchi's organization of the universities lasted unchanged to the end of Fascism. Bottai had to carry on the provisions of the decree of 1936, although they aimed at perpetuating that compromise between vocational and scientific education which was to be avoided according to the School Charter.

## CONCLUSION

FASCISM lasted twenty years. Persons now between twenty and forty were brought up, or started their responsible life, while Fascism was developing its ideology and trying to perpetuate itself by persuasion, compulsion, and fighting. Are these people, who bear the burden of carrying on the life and civilization of their country, deeply affected by that ideology? The institutions in which the younger generation began to learn how to behave and what to believe were transformed in order to fit the new ideology; many were created to meet new needs. Are these institutions radically impregnated with the 'spirit of Fascism'? And, after all, is this ideology, this 'spirit of Fascism', something that can be isolated at will and thrown away when it is recognized as harmful? What way is open to those who feel a duty or a wish to help the Italian people towards recovering a normal and decent life? Answers to most of these questions can be given only when the present has become past history. Some consideration is, however, indispensable if an answer is to be found to the last question, which cannot wait long for a reply.

The impressive sight of thousands of young people parading in uniform and proclaiming their loyalty to the Duce was not a faithful picture of their state of mind. Education and propaganda had not only, and not pre-eminently, the effect of inculcating a sense of loyalty to Mussolini and of their duty to bring about the new Roman empire. This side of the picture exists; and it can be easily under-estimated. Especially among the youngest ones, who had their elementary education after 1930, and were trained in the O.N.B. and G.I.L. from their first years, many reached their military age in the expectation of triumphs such as that over Abyssinia. Their minds had not been opened to any alternative, and their imagination was easily caught by the hope of greatness. The two myths of Rome and of the Duce worked powerfully on those whose uncritical attitude was praised as generous self-denial. But this was not the case with the majority of young people. In the last five years of the régime the Fascist leaders urgently felt the problem of fitting youth into the national life. The leaders of the 'Youth movement' were no longer young; and young people, it was felt, did not respond to the requirements of the régime. It is not possible to analyse the attitude of youth in detail; still less possible is it to define it in a few characteristics. It was not, on the whole, a refusal to

obey orders or to accept a doctrine. It was rather, at least for many young people, a sense of frustration and a sense of vagueness; frustration in being told that the world belonged to them, and seeing that the world was in fact ruled by those who had ceased to be young for a long time past; vagueness, because young people, if they are intelligent, cannot long believe that there is only one solution to the problems of social life and want to discuss and to discover new ways, and to know what other people think. If this is discouraged and people trained to repeat slogans such as 'Mussolini is always right' there arrive that vague dissatisfaction, scepticism, and even cynicism that became characteristic of a large number of boys of sixteen and more after 1930 and down to the present day.

Some aspects of Fascism certainly affected most young people, whether they realized it or not. The problems of national life, and especially the economic problems, are now present to the minds of all as fundamental problems to be solved if the life of individuals and communities is to become normal. The need for leadership, whether by one leader or more, is considered by very many as essential for a political organization; and the ideas of choice, election, and delegation of power are less present to the mind than those of hierarchy, imposition, and obedience. This does not mean that there is a definite liking for the authoritarian system; it means only that what presents itself to the mind is more rarely the right of individuals to have a voice in public things than the need for somebody to be 'on top'.

The educational system has been, one may say, tormented by reforms and alterations all through the twenty Fascist years. No new system has been created; but the old one has been reshaped and has felt the pressure of all those ideas and activities which were the unripe fruit of Fascist educational doctrine. The schools preserved a structure which had been given to them eighty years before, and which had been subjected to a restless evolution from the beginning down to the last years. The Intermediate School was not really new, and certainly not peculiarly Fascist; the last 'reform' was one more of the many attempts to find a better solution for one of the outstanding problems growing out of the old State school system. Teaching itself, apart from the elementary schools, was only slightly touched by the new ideology. But side by side with the solid structure of the schools, the new institutions of an educational and political character brought something really new into the experience of the growing generations. The youth organizations owed their success perhaps to the fact that they met a need for more physical training and team spirit. It is possible that the military attitude required of

millions of boys and girls has left some traces in the character of a number of them. But the sporting aspect has certainly had a much greater influence on the masses. Training for leadership may have given a few a greater sense of responsibility; but it was often noticed that the shy and self-conscious lads profited less from the lessons in leadership than the bullies. The pride of belonging to the immense army of the Duce, ready to conquer from earliest youth upwards, and to serve the country, even though only by guarding a petrol tin, was essential to all these soldiers, big and small; but it was accompanied all too often by the vanity of wearing a uniform, or by the boredom of 'having to do it'.

The vast number of officials of the Party and youth organizations who were added as a fourth class of people dealing with the upbringing of youth, side by side, or in contrast, with parents, churchmen, and teachers, were strictly tied to the régime by their position, even though not always by their conscience. A number of them took up their work with a strong sense of duty towards their country and its leader; by far the greater number were prompted by the ambition of command and by the practical advantages of a prominent position in public life. It did not come as a surprise to those who had known this military-political hierarchy that when Mussolini, for whom they were bound by oath to give their lives, was dismissed no attempt on their part was made to rescue him. For most of them this meant only the loss of a position. It is very likely that many of them will have still the same ambitions as before, and the hope that in a new system, whatever it is, they will find their way in public life. It will be difficult for them to abandon the methods used for so many years in climbing up to good positions and openly based on disrespect for individual values.

The teachers have, on the whole, distinguished the political side of education—very often accepted unwillingly—from the intellectual and moral sides. The reason for their choice of career was still, as in the past, their sense of a vocation to give younger people a share in their experience and inclination. There may have been an increase in the number of young people, especially boys, attracted to the teaching profession by the financial advantages or, in elementary schools, by a political career in the youth organizations. In recent years it was quite frequent to hear students of Training Colleges saying that they wanted to become teachers in order to bring up 'Mussolini's generation'. But there was in these words rarely anything more than rhetoric and a desire to please. The passion for teaching was still the most important determining factor in the choice of

this career, except for those who saw in the secure, though very modest, financial situation a good alternative either to unemployment or to a perpetual struggle for a living. The preference given to politically reliable elements did not have a good effect on the standard of teachers, especially in the universities, but culture has not thereby been completely stifled or directed into one path. The *Enciclopedia Italiana* has been written to a very large extent by university teachers, and is a document of a very rich, and on the whole, independent cultural life. The predominance of political interests and the inroads of Party mentality into the schools came rather too late to affect them on a very large scale and to break completely a quite good tradition. The class of teachers, as it was on the eve of the war, was certainly adapting itself to Fascism more and more, but it was very far from being absorbed by it or impregnated with its ideology. The special organizations for teachers were a complete failure; and the Party itself had a very loose grip on the schools from the point of view of the teachers.

Fascism could never find a definition for itself. The vicissitudes of educational institutions in the last twenty years have shown how planless Fascist policy has been. The Fascist doctrine itself was either Gentile's idealism, nourished for a long time on liberal principles, or syndicalism, sometimes extremely democratic, at other times aristocratic. Everything that might be or look successful was termed Fascist, whether it had been initiated by the State, the Party, or by individuals. The vague conception of nationalism, which includes so many good aspects, was appropriated in full by Fascism; and so were those of sense of duty, respect for authority, and progress in a material and technical sense. Having absorbed and monopolized a great number of ideas and given an immense impulse to some of them, either old or new, the label of Fascism was applied to many good or necessary things. Sporting activities became Fascist, just like charitable organizations. It is therefore difficult to see to what extent nationalism in education is bound up with Fascism; and it would be unjust to suspect all big sporting organizations because they have progressed under Fascism. On the other hand there are some aspects in Italian life that have prospered under Fascism, like blackmailing, which do not necessarily require a Party or a Duce to go on undisturbed. If one wants to extirpate the Fascist disease, which lies primarily in the disregard for individual rights and in aggressiveness, one must be careful not to kill all the sources of life which have worked with and through Fascism.

The school system, as has been shown, preserves the main

features it possessed before Fascism. The changes brought about by the reforms of Gentile and Bottai were on the whole in the line of normal evolution. Unless the principles of a State educational system, namely, compulsory and free education for children up to at least ten or eleven years of age, a final check on private schools, a variety of types of secondary schools, and a prevalent humanist attitude are to be changed, the vast majority of educational institutions existing in Italy will be able to continue their life after Fascism. The disappearance of the Fascist Party and organizations will not leave any empty space in the schools. It will be necessary to revise the curricula of the secondary schools, especially those of history and economics. The school books for the elementary schools will have to be completely rewritten, and the quite good tradition of children's school books, interrupted in 1929, will have to be restored. The books for the secondary schools may need revision; but a great number of them remained unaffected by Fascism. Many teachers in elementary schools will find it difficult to give a different turn to their lessons, especially so long as they have to deal with the same children who started life in the Fascist organizations. A number of them will feel it their duty to keep alive the tradition and hopes of Fascism. In small towns and villages where the teachers had a political position as well it may be difficult to bring them into line with a new order of things. In secondary schools and universities the 'change-over' will not be difficult. The disappearance of political organizations, especially those for youth, will call for a great deal of activity to give young people an opportunity for physical training, which is the thing they liked in the G.I.L. and G.U.F. Very much had already been done on these lines before Fascism; but it is certain that many more people are now interested in sports and physical training, and it is through this channel that Fascism appealed to a great number of people. A particularly delicate point is that of physical education in the schools. The teachers came mainly from the Fascist Academies of Rome and Orvieto, and carried most extreme views and methods into the schools. It may prove necessary to revise the position of many of them.

There will be many big problems to be solved in order to improve Italian education. Perhaps the biggest problem will not be that of 'de-Fascistization'. The need for a degree or a school certificate of some kind dominates the minds of students and of their families too much. The immense increase in students at secondary schools and universities (there were 130,000 university students in 1942) has resulted more from the importance of a degree for getting a post in industry, trade,

the professions, or the public service than from a desire for better education.

This economic and psychological factor is responsible for the worst habits of many parents and students, and of a number of teachers as well, which are summarized in the word *raccomandazioni*. There is no lack of good teachers and students; but the excessive number of students, and the perpetual worry about getting a certificate or degree as soon as possible, often mar good intentions. The myth that to go to school as long as possible is the best investment for children has got hold of so many people that it has become much rarer to see the right students in the right schools. Another point which has been considered by educationists and reformers for the whole of the past century is how to 'bring life nearer to the school'. In spite of much good will, a satisfactory answer has never been found. The intellectual outlook has prevailed throughout, and when a departure has been attempted it has been in the direction of technique and vocational training. Only very rarely, and in the very first stages of education, has the attempt been made to train young people for social life. Every individual student has to think for himself and himself alone. The only responsibility a student feels is that of learning what he is asked to learn in order to pass his examinations. Whenever the claim to have brought 'more life into the schools' was made, what was done was to teach something more about what happened or had happened in the world, hardly ever to make young people live a more complete life, not limited to lessons, books, interrogations, and examinations. The Fascist experiment to meet this need with the youth organizations was doomed to failure by its political and militaristic bias and the dualism which was never overcome between school and Party activities.

If the attention of Italian educationists and those from other countries who desire to collaborate is directed to these most serious problems there is hope that definite progress will be made. It is possible that the power of the State as it has been exercised for the last eighty years in the field of education will be recognized to be too great; it is possible that the idea of judging the progress of a nation by the number of schools and students will be discarded; and that new ways will be found, free from these dogmas, to bring up the children born during and after the war. Whatever the best solution may be, it is to be hoped that the problem of Italian education will not be seen only in terms of 'getting rid of Fascism'. There are things which ought to be preserved; the first among these is respect for learning and the humanist tradition. There are many things which



ought to be changed immediately; these are the Fascist aberrations. Other things can be changed only by a slow process supported by much good will, and having for its object to ensure that the many years spent by children at school result in their becoming better citizens and better men.



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**THIS BOOK PRESENTS A VERY** thorough account of what Mussolini himself called the most Fascist of all Fascist reforms—the reform of education.

Part I is concerned with sketching in the background, and gives a short account of the history of Italian education from the Risorgimento to the dawn of the Fascist regime. Part II describes the early Fascist reform carried out by Gentile in 1923, that strange combination of genuine idealism and humanism mixed with a cloudy and bombastic philosophy. Part III deals with the series of changes which aimed at making education more completely Fascist, and resulting in an increased interference with the liberty of the teacher. Part IV describes Bottai's School Charter of 1939 which established Italian education in the form which it retained until the fall of the regime.

The book gives some ground for the view that Fascism has never penetrated very deeply into the spirit of the Italian people, and for the hope that their awakening from the evil dream of imperialism may not be a very long or difficult process now that the Fascist leaders have been removed from power.

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